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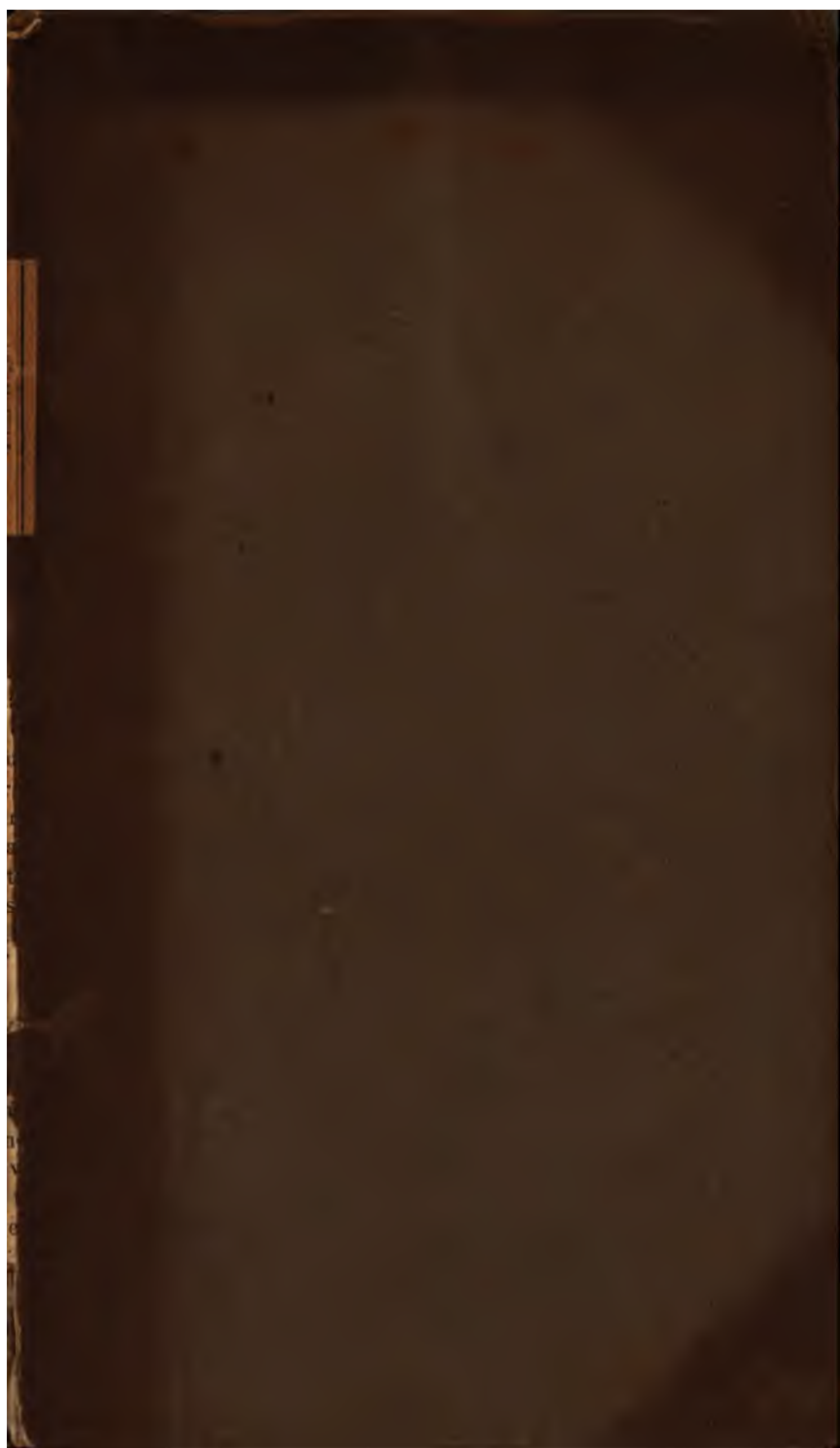
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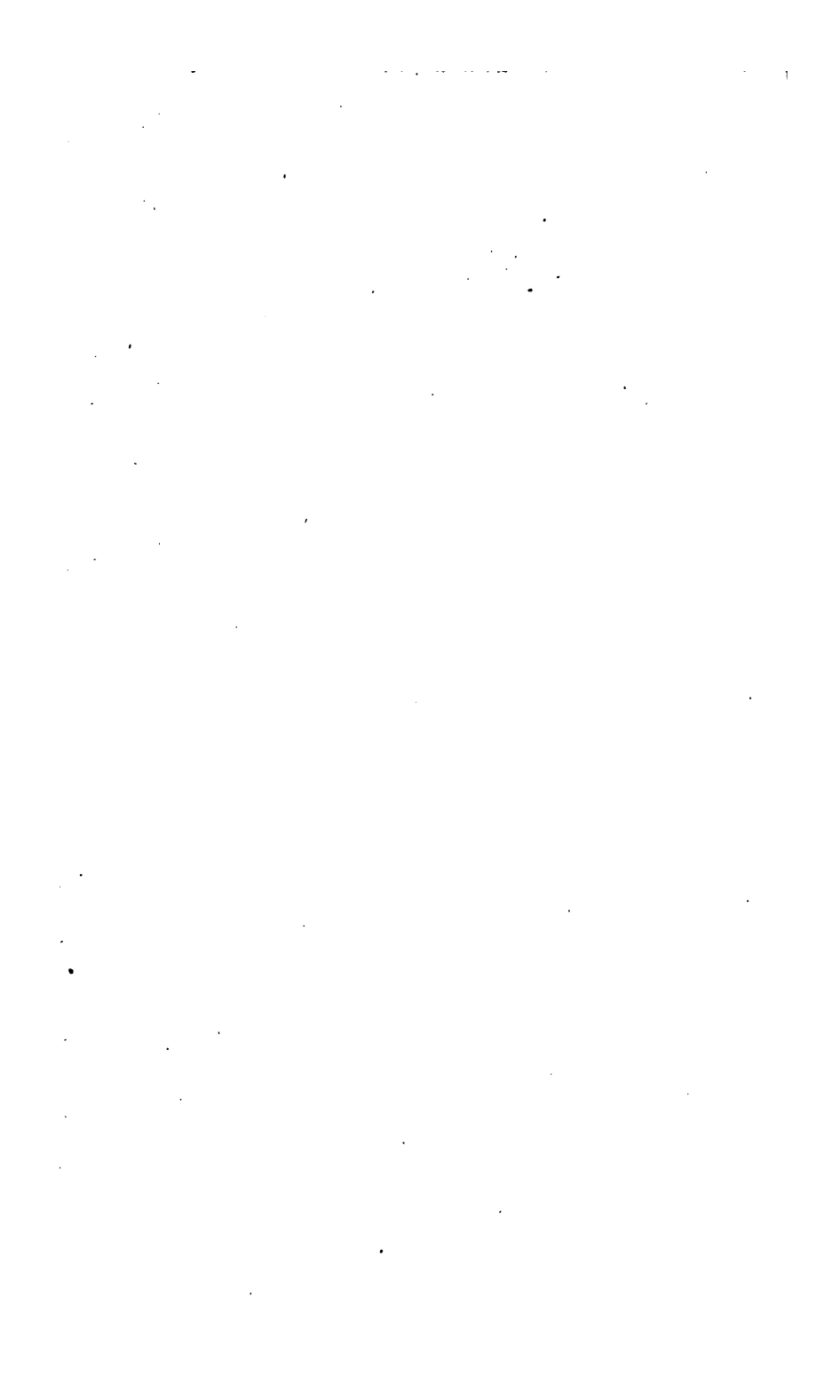
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A TREATISE  
ON  
ENGLISH COMPOSITION ;

INCLUDING  
A GENERAL VIEW  
OF THE



GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

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BY HENRY W. WILLIAMS,  
AUTHOR OF "A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE VERSIFI-  
CATION OF THE ILIAD AND ODYSSEY."

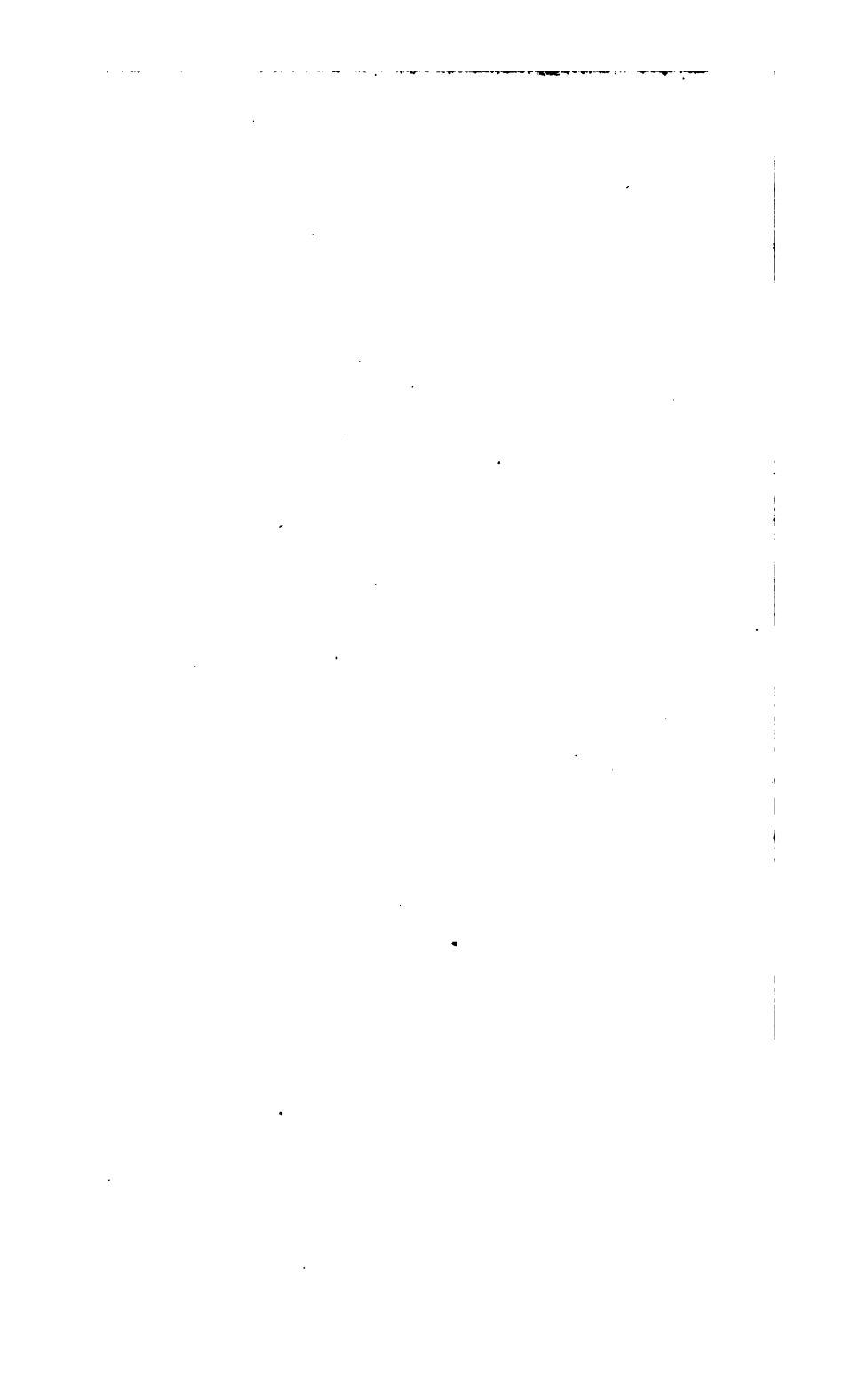
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1836.

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**A TREATISE**  
**ON**  
**ENGLISH COMPOSITION.**



should embrace ; and I have ventured to hope, that it is calculated to meet the wants of advanced pupils in schools, and of young persons engaged in the cultivation of their own minds. In the treatment of some subjects, I have departed from the method usually chosen ; but it has been my constant endeavour to secure clearness and simplicity of thought.

In dedicating to you this little volume, I may be allowed to express the high opinion which I entertain, of the accuracy and extent of your learning, and of your correct taste for the beauties of the English language. It will afford me the greatest satisfaction, should this treatise meet your approbation, as an auxiliary to the attainment of a correct and elegant style.

HENRY W. WILLIAMS.

*December 15, 1835.*

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## CHAPTER I.

### A GENERAL VIEW OF THE GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

IN examining the structure of a language, we naturally inquire, in the first instance, into the letters of which it consists, and their combination into words; and these subjects are expressed by the term *Orthography*, which forms the first general division of grammar. Further reflection will suggest the propriety of distributing words into distinct classes, according to some common properties of meaning or of use. Thus "man," "assistant," "table," "book," may be assigned to one class, as being the names of persons and things; while "promote," "urge," must be placed in another, as indicating *an action exerted*. It will be observed too, by the attentive student, that some words undergo certain changes, as "father," "father's,"—"I promote," "I promoted;" and every such change will require to be made the subject of investigation. The division of words into various classes, and the changes which they undergo, form the two leading subjects of *Etymology*, which constitutes the second branch of grammar. The derivation of words, which this term includes when taken in its full extent, should rather be studied from a Dictionary of established character, than from a grammatical treatise.

The next subject that will present itself to the student of a language is, the arrangement of words into sentences. He will observe, that there are certain usages to be attended to, the violation of which would disfigure a composition, and be revolting to a cultivated mind. Thus it is not allowed to say, "He spoke to *she*," but "He spoke to *her*;" not "Ignorance and

vice *is* deplorable," but "Ignorance and vice *are* deplorable." The rules which have respect to the combination of words into sentences, are included under the term *Syntax*, which points out the third division of grammar. The remaining subjects of inquiry, which grammar embraces, are the correct reading of sentences, and the laws of *poetry*; and these constitute the fourth division of the study, usually termed *Prosody*.

It will be evident, that the two branches of grammar, which are most intimately connected with English Composition, are *Etymology* and *Syntax*. A correct knowledge of these is the principal means of insuring accuracy of expression, and the only foundation of a chaste and elegant style. To these two branches of grammar, the following remarks will be limited; since they are designed, not to constitute a complete grammatical system, but to afford a general view of the structure and usages of the English language.

*Etymology* has been said to refer to the several *classes* of words of which a language consists, and to the *changes* which words undergo. The first inquiry, then, which arises in relation to it, is, what are the classes into which the words of the English language may be most appropriately distributed?

It cannot be expected, that on this subject, perfect unanimity should exist among grammarians; since every distribution of words must originate in individual judgment, and its propriety becomes therefore, a fit subject of inquiry. Dr. Blair has suggested the division of the words of our language into *substantives*, *attributives*, and *connectives*: but this classification, however neat and simple it may appear, would involve serious inconvenience. It does not provide for *all* the words found within the compass of our language; nor is it sufficiently *minute* and *distinct*, for the purposes of grammatical explanation.

The common distribution of words into *Articles*, *Substantives*, *Adjectives*, *Pronouns*, *Verbs*, *Adverbs*, *Prepositions*, *Conjunctions*, and *Interjections*, appears to be on the whole, consistent and suitable. Though liable to some objections, it *approaches* to accuracy of thought; and

it is, in nearly all its bearings, convenient for practice. Each of these kinds of words, or as they are generally termed, *parts of speech*, must now be separately considered.

The ARTICLES of the English language are *a* and *the*. They are used before substantives to show their reference, as "*a* garden," which is a general expression applicable to any garden,—"*the* garden," which points out some particular garden, to which the hearer or reader will immediately advert. This difference in the force of the articles has caused "*the*" to be styled the *definite* article, and "*a*" the *indefinite*. It may be affirmed, in a general manner, that *an* is used instead of *a*, before a word commencing with a vowel, or with *h* not pronounced; but to this remark there are two exceptions, that *a* is employed before *u*, when it has a long sound, as in "*useful*," "*union*,"—and that before words beginning with *h* actually sounded, but having the accent on the second syllable, as "*heroic*," "*historian*," *an* is used for the sake of greater softness of pronunciation.

SUBSTANTIVES OR NOUNS are the *names* of persons and things,—the last word being taken in its most extensive sense. Thus "*man*," "*Cicero*," are substantives; "*book*," "*property*," also are substantives; and "*goodness*," as the name of a *quality*,—"love," "*joy*," as the names of certain *feelings*,—"sonship," as the name of a *relation*, with other words, equally, differing in their particular reference, but agreeing in that they are the *names* of things, must be assigned to this class.

Every substantive is considered to be of some gender, number, and case. The distinction of *Gender* has originated in the difference of sex among animals; so that the names of males are said to be of the masculine gender, those of females are called feminine, and substantives which designate *objects*, to which of course the distinction of sex cannot be extended, are called neuter. To this general statement, there are however, a few exceptions. Some inanimate objects have been commonly invested by the imagination with masculine or feminine attributes; and general use has made the nouns which express them, of the masculine or feminine gender.

Thus we consider the *sun* to be masculine, and say, "He rises," "He sets," not in the neuter gender, "It rises," "It sets." The moon, the earth, a ship, and some other objects are made feminine; and we very frequently personify qualities, as *justice, mercy, benevolence*, giving to those which are tender and inviting, the female character, and ascribing the masculine gender to those which involve greater firmness and dignity. This use of the names of qualities, however, is rather to be placed among the figures of speech, and viewed as a beauty which may occasionally adorn animated discourse, than considered as a regular usage of the language, requiring universal observance.

The doctrine of the *Numbers* of substantives, is exceedingly simple and obvious. Nouns are distinguished according as they express *one* object, or *more than one*: thus "chair," "box," are said to be *singular*, and "chairs," "boxes," the terms formed from them by a slight change of termination, are considered *plural*.

It is usual to ascribe to English substantives, *three Cases*, the nominative, the possessive, and the objective. The first of these is the regular form of the noun, as "father," and in the plural "fathers." The second involves a change of termination, as "father's," plural "fathers'"; and it is employed to express either possession, or a very intimate connexion, as "My father's estate," "Our fathers' God." The third case is the same in form as the nominative; but it is considered to occur, when the substantive follows an active verb, so as to point out the *object* of an action or a feeling, and when it comes after a preposition, as "He esteems my father," "They applied to my father for advice."

The question has, however, been discussed among grammarians, whether it is proper to assign to the substantives of our language, an *objective* case? The fact, that in no instance, does the form of the objective differ from that of the nominative, appears to militate against the admission of this third case: and it may be contended, that greater *simplicity* attaches to that system which excludes it. If indeed, we restricted our views to substantives, we could scarcely point out any advantage

resulting from ascribing to them the objective case. But, when we look at the pronouns, "I," "thou," "he," "she," we find that their form is changed, after verbs active and prepositions; as "It was sent to *me*," "He esteems *her*." To this form of the pronouns in question, some name must be assigned; we term it with propriety, the *objective* case; and it thus becomes natural to regard substantives also, when placed after active verbs or prepositions, as being of the objective case, though their *form* differs not from that which we designate the nominative.

ADJECTIVES are words employed in connexion with substantives, to express some property or quality, as "An *agreeable* companion," "A *happy* woman." It may be remarked, that some substantives designate qualities, as "goodness," "meekness;" but that which distinguishes every adjective is, that it belongs to some substantive expressed or understood, or to a pronoun occupying the place of a substantive. The very name of *adjective*, derived from the Latin *adjectus*, "added to," is designed to express this circumstance. The use of the term "meekness," alone, fixes the mind on the quality in the abstract,—it leads us to contemplate this quality itself, separately from any person considered to possess it. When, again, this substantive is used as in the phrase, "The meekness of the Saviour," it makes this quality of the Saviour's character, the grand object of attention: but when the correspondent adjective is employed, as "The meek Saviour of mankind," the Saviour himself becomes the great object of regard, while the attribute of meekness ascribed to him, occupies a subordinate, though still an important place.

The adjectives of the English language, undergo no change of form, according to the number, gender, or case, of the substantives with which they are associated. The word "industrious," for instance, can be used with the singular noun "man," and the plural "men;" and it can be connected with the feminine substantives, "woman," "mother," as appropriately as with the masculine term "man." It is only when a person or object is compared with another, or with several others,



that our adjectives vary their termination, to intimate the *degree* in which a quality is possessed. Thus from the adjective "wise," which is said to be in the positive state, we have the comparative "wiser," as "He is wiser than his companions," and the superlative "wisest," as "He was the wisest of all the senators."

PRONOUNS are usually defined to be words employed instead of nouns, to avoid unpleasant repetitions : but the former part of this definition is not strictly applicable to many words, which are by universal consent, placed in this class. It cannot surely be said of the pronouns "every," "this," used as in the phrases "Every man," "This house," that they are employed "instead of nouns," if indeed this word is considered to be equivalent to *substantives*. A more consistent definition appears to be, that pronouns are words used to prevent disagreeable repetitions, or circumlocutions, some of them having the character of substantives, and others that of adjectives. Thus the term "I," enables us to avoid the unpleasant circumlocution, "the person speaking," and it is evidently used like a substantive, as "I understand," "I feel." The pronoun "who," also, in the phrase, "The man who did this," enables us concisely to express an idea, which could not be otherwise intimated without considerable periphrasis ; and it is evidently construed like a substantive, and forms in this instance, the nominative to the verb "did." In the phrase "This house is mine," we have the two pronouns, "this," and "mine ;" and by their use we avoid the lengthened expression, "The house which you see belongs to the person speaking : " but the former pronoun is obviously employed like an adjective, with the substantive "house" immediately following it.

The correctness of this view of pronouns, that they are words used to avoid circumlocutions, but having the character either of substantives or of adjectives, can scarcely be questioned. Nor is there any difficulty in tracing its accordance with the usual distribution of pronouns into the *Personal*, the *Relative*, and the *Adjective*, pronouns. The first of these divisions includes "I," "thou," "he," "she," "it," together with

the compound terms, "myself," "thyself," "himself," "herself," "itself:" all which are evidently construed in the same manner as substantives. These pronouns are termed *personal*, because they clearly distinguish between a person speaking, a person spoken to, and a person or thing spoken of: "I," and "myself," are therefore said to be of the *first* person, "thou," "thyself," of the *second*, and "he," "she," "it," &c., of the *third* person.

Under the second division, are comprised "who," "which," and "that" used as in the phrase, "He that acts prudently." The term "*which*" was doubtless *primarily* used in the manner of an adjective: thus we read, "For *which* hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews." This circumstance throws light on the origin of its occasional application to persons in the Sacred Writings; as "Our Father, *which* art in heaven." Now however, this pronoun is seldom employed as an adjective; but by an obvious and familiar ellipsis, it occurs *substantively*, and frequently becomes the nominative to a verb, as "The day, *which* shall lay open the hearts of all men," for "which day shall lay open." The pronoun "*who*" is always used like a substantive, being equivalent to the phrase, "which person." In modern style, either this pronoun, or the term "that," is invariably employed in relation to a person previously spoken of; and the use of "*which*" is restricted to the case of brute animals, and inanimate objects. "That," considered as a relative, is applicable to *things* as well as to persons; and "what" constitutes a compound relative, being a compendious term for "the thing which," or "that which."

In regard to the third division of pronouns, the very name assigned to it intimates, that the words which it includes are properly and originally employed as *adjectives*. By an easy ellipsis, however, many of them are sometimes used without a substantive following, and in such constructions, they may be called adjective pronouns employed *substantively*. The word "this" is used like an adjective, in the phrase, "This house;" but by an ellipsis of the term, "thing," it occurs sub-

stantively in "He did this." The term "each" is found in its proper character as an adjective pronoun, in the sentence, "Each individual declared his assent;" but it is employed substantively in "Each declared his assent." The expression, "Other ministers have pursued this course," presents an adjective use of the term "other;" but this word is frequently employed in the manner of a substantive, and when thus introduced, it admits of declension, as "The other's decision," "Others may believe this." These instances will suffice to illustrate the character and use of the third branch of pronouns; and it is only necessary to add a brief explanation of its various *subdivisions*, formed for the purpose of marking more distinctly, the peculiar reference and bearing of the words which it comprises. Some are termed *possessive*, as frequently expressing possession or property; they are "my," "thy," "his," "her;" "our," "your," "their." Four others, viz: "each," "every," "either," "neither," are styled *distributive*, because they serve to distribute as it were, a number of persons or objects, by leading us to regard them *separately*. Two others, "this" and "that," having as their plural forms, "these" and "those," are called *demonstrative*, since they distinctly show, or point out, the person or thing intended. Others are named *indefinite*, as "some," "other," "any," "such,"—terms which do *not* define, or mark out, particular persons or objects. It appears necessary, also, to introduce a fifth subdivision, the *interrogative* adjective pronouns, including "which" and "what," when employed in asking questions, as "What works are you reading?" "Which of the brothers would you choose?" In the former of these sentences, "what" is evidently not a compound relative; it cannot be exchanged for "that which," and it is construed in the very same manner as adjective pronouns in general. In the latter sentence, likewise, "which" may be most appropriately designated an interrogative adjective pronoun, employed by a familiar ellipsis of the term "brother," or "person." When "who" is employed interrogatively, as "Who gave this?" it is equivalent to "what person?" or

"which person?" and is therefore always construed substantively. It is scarcely necessary to add, that like many other adjective pronouns, "what" is sometimes used for "what thing," as in the phrases, "What have you promised?" "What are you doing?"

The consideration of the remaining parts of speech, must be reserved for the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER II.

### A GENERAL VIEW OF THE GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE—*continued.*

IN pursuing our inquiries into the Etymology of the English language, we must now investigate **VERBS**, which form a very numerous and important class of words.

Without minutely examining the controversy, respecting the most appropriate definition of a verb, and the particulars that are really essential to it, we may observe, that it expresses action, suffering, or a state of being, of some person or thing mentioned, and this with a reference to time. Thus in the phrase "He rejects," the latter term is a verb expressing action; and it is sufficiently distinguished by the foregoing statement, from the substantive "rejection:" "I live," also, presents an instance of a verb intimating a state of being, and the difference between it and the substantive "life," is clearly exhibited in the preceding remark. The only case in which the above explanation of a verb is found inapplicable, is that in which the infinitive mood is employed without involving the idea of *time*, and assumes, in fact, the character of a substantive, as "To deceive is shameful," used for "Deceit is shameful."

The different *kinds* of verbs have been already alluded to in the remark, that "a verb expresses action, suffering, or a state of being." Most grammarians adopt the distribution into Active, Passive, and Neuter; and the

difference of these may be clearly seen in the examples, "I strike," "I am struck," "I live," "I walk." The first, "I strike," implies an action *exerted on some object*, and is therefore called Active or Transitive: the second, "I am struck," is the reverse of the former; it intimates an action *received*, and is termed a Passive verb: while "I live" and "I walk" are two examples of Neuter or Intransitive verbs, the former simply expressing a state of being, and the latter an action which does not pass over to an external object, but is confined to the agent himself. Some have proposed to subdivide the last class, by arranging those verbs which merely intimate being or a state of being, as "I am," "I live," "I sleep," under the designation Neuter, and placing under the head of Active Intransitive, those which imply a degree of action, but are yet employed without an object acted upon, as "I walk," "I think." Such an arrangement, however, though it appears neat and pleasing, would involve some inconvenience.

The *Moods* of verbs form the next subject of inquiry. These have been usually styled the Indicative, the Imperative, the Potential, the Subjunctive, and the Infinitive; and there is no reason to depart, in reference to them, from the usual course. The simplest explanation of them appears to be, that the Indicative refers to that which *actually* is, or has been, or will be, as "I rule," "I have ruled," "Wilt thou rule?" the Imperative to that which we *command*, or *wish*, to be, as "Rule thou;" the Potential to that which *may*, *can*, *would*, or *should*, be, since it is formed by the addition of these terms to the principal verb, as "I may rule," "I would rule," &c.; the Subjunctive to that which *is supposed to be*, as "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" while the Infinitive expresses an action, or state, in a *general* and *indefinite* manner, as "I wish to rule," "I will endeavour to please him."

In regard to the Subjunctive mood, there is one particular which requires to be carefully remembered in composition,—that it has a peculiar form, used to *suppose* a thing in relation to *the future*, which is very different from that employed to suppose a thing in rela-

tion to *the present*. The expression, "If he *studies*," obviously refers to a *present* course of study, though it implies uncertainty on the part of the person using it, whether the individual of whom he speaks, does, or does not, study. On the other hand, "If he *study*," has respect to *future* study, and is evidently an abbreviation of "If he should study."

The *Tenses* of verbs are the various forms which they assume, to express *time*, and to mark likewise an action or state, as *progressive*, or as *complete*. The Indicative mood is usually considered to have six tenses, which, in the case of the verb "to rule," may be thus exhibited:—

<i>Present</i> , I rule.	<i>Pluperfect</i> , I had ruled.
<i>Imperfect</i> , I ruled.	} 1st. <i>Future</i> , I shall, or will, rule.
I was ruling.	
<i>Perfect</i> , I have ruled.	2d. <i>Future</i> , I shall have ruled.

Each of these forms requires separate consideration.

The Present tense generally refers, as its name implies, to that which *now* is, as "I rule," "I love." In some instances, it expresses that which is *customary*, as "He *thinks* accurately." It is found also in *general* propositions, which have no particular relation to time, as "From nothing nothing *proceeds*." Occasionally it is used to give a vivid representation of past transactions, —to bring them before the mind as if actually present. Thus we say, "Cæsar *commands* his army to advance," "Socrates *reasons* powerfully." In a few connexions, this tense may be introduced when future time is, in fact, implied; as "When he *arrives*, he will hear the news."

The Imperfect tense is usually regarded as embracing the two forms above mentioned, "I ruled," and "I was ruling." Between these forms of the verb there is however, a considerable difference; and if we select the verb "to travel" as our illustration, the difference becomes still more obvious and striking. The sentence, "I travelled from London to York," represents the travelling as *past* and *complete*; but "I was travelling from London to York," represents it as *progressive*. To the latter mode of expression only, can the name

*Imperfect* be applied with propriety ; while the former, " I travelled," " I ruled," &c., may be more correctly termed the *Indefinite Perfect*, or, to borrow an epithet from the Greek language, and one which is applied to that tense in Greek, which corresponds to the English " I ruled," " I travelled,"—the *Aorist*.

The Perfect tense, or as it may be properly styled, the *Definite Perfect*, either points out an action as *just now finished*, or brings a past and complete action into *some connexion with the present*. Thus, " I have come from London," " Cicero has written orations," allusion being made in the latter sentence, to orations which are still extant.

The force of the Pluperfect tense may be clearly discerned in the sentence, " I had completed my arrangements, when he arrived." It not only represents an action as past and complete, but it marks this circumstance also, that it was complete *before* some action or event, now past, took place.

The First Future tense exhibits an action as *future*, or *yet to come*. In some cases, indeed, the terms " shall " and " will," by means of which it is formed, imply a *fixed purpose*, or *resolution*, as " He *shall* go," " I *will* assert this principle ; " but as far as *time* is concerned, this tense simply expresses futurity.

The Second Future tense represents an action as one that *will be finished* before some particular time : as " I shall have dined at two o'clock."

In the Imperative mood, only the Present tense is recognised, as " Rule thou." The Potential is considered to have the four following tenses :—Present, " I may, or can, rule,"—Imperfect, " I might, could, would, or should, rule,"—Perfect, " I may, or can, have ruled,"—Pluperfect, " I might, could, would, or should have ruled." The investigation of the peculiar uses of each of these forms, would be too extensive for this general outline of English grammar.

In the Subjunctive mood, we have all the tenses of the Indicative, without any change of form, excepting that which occurs in the present tense, when employed to suppose a thing in relation to the future ; as, " If he

*study*," "Though he *slay* me," used for "If he should study," "Though he should slay me." It will perhaps be asked, What reason exists for ascribing so many tenses to the Subjunctive mood, if with a single exception, they have precisely the same form as in the Indicative? The reply is, that in the Indicative they are used to *assert* a thing as *actual*; and in the Subjunctive only to *suppose* it. Thus in the clause, "They knew this before," the verb "knew" belongs to the Indicative mood, since it forms part of a positive assertion; but in the sentence, "If they knew this before, they are very culpable," it becomes Subjunctive, because it occurs in a supposition. This view of the Subjunctive mood, enables us to preserve consistency in the explanation of such expressions as "Had they known this," "If they had known this." In the former of these, the verb "had known" must certainly be recognised as Subjunctive; it does, *of itself*, convey a supposition, and the peculiar position of the auxiliary "had" and the principal verb "known," renders a conjunction unnecessary. But if in this phrase, the verb is regarded as Subjunctive, it should likewise be viewed as sustaining this character in, "If they had known this," a phrase which differs from the preceding, only in having the conjunction expressed, and the auxiliary and the principal verb, placed in intimate connexion.

The Infinitive mood has only two tenses, the Present, "to rule," and the Perfect, "to have ruled."

A correct application of the tenses of verbs, is of the highest importance in every kind of writing. If that which is usually styled the Imperfect, be used for the Perfect, or the Perfect for the Pluperfect, the meaning as well as the beauty of a sentence, must be considerably affected and injured. It is particularly necessary to exercise care in the use of the tenses, when two verbs are associated, so that the latter expresses time *in relation to the time of the former*. It would be not only inelegant, but incorrect, to say, "I wished to have written," in order to express a past intention of writing; for the present tense of the Infinitive, "I wished



to write," is evidently required to show, that the writing did not *precede* the wish, but was *immediately* to follow it. The difference between "He appeared to study Greek," and "He appeared to have studied Greek," must be perceptible to every one who contrasts these expressions. The former exhibits the studying as *present* in relation to the time intimated by the verb "appeared;" the latter presents it as *past*, in relation to that time. Obvious as these particulars are, when they are distinctly considered, they may escape the attention of a writer, intent on the general train of ideas which he wishes to communicate, unless his mind is formed, by the constant habit of discrimination, to accuracy and elegance of style.

The *Numbers* and *Persons* of verbs correspond to those of substantives and pronouns. Thus in the present tense of the Indicative mood of the verb "to rule," we find,

	<i>Singular.</i>	<i>Plural.</i>
<i>First Person.</i>	I rule.	We rule.
<i>Second Person.</i>	Thou rulest.	Ye, or you, rule.
<i>Third Person.</i>	He rules, or ruleth.	They rule.

Similar variations are found in the other tenses.

The *Participles* of verbs have their name from the circumstance, that they partake of the characters of verbs and adjectives. They express action, suffering, or a state of being, like verbs, and this with a reference to time: but they are construed with substantives and pronouns, in the same manner as adjectives. The following are instances of their use;—"Cæsar, *confiding* in the valour of his troops, advanced to action," "*Having engaged* to be present, he could not but attend," "*Loved* and *caressed*, he became effeminate." Every active, neuter, and passive verb has three participles: thus, "I love" has "loving," "loved," and "having loved." "I walk" has "walking," "walked," "having walked;" and "I am loved" has "being loved," "loved," "having been loved." The neuter participle "walked," and the active "loved," are however, never used except in the formation of the compound tenses, as "I have walked," "I had loved." In the example, "Loved and

caressed, he became effeminate," the term "loved" is evidently a passive participle.

Respecting participles it is important to observe, that they express time, in relation to the time of the verb with which they are connected. Thus is the sentence, "Cæsar, confiding in the valour of his troops, advanced to action," the participle "confiding" is present, although the feeling which it expresses, is in reality past; for it is designed to mark the confidence of Cæsar, as *present* at the time of his advancing to action.

It is generally allowed, that some participles occasionally pass into adjectives. The word "loving" for instance, which is a participle in the sentence, "Many, loving the pleasures of the world, reject the invitations of Divine mercy," becomes an adjective in the expression, "A loving and attentive child." In the former instance, it points out a particular state of feeling, at some given time: in the latter, it exhibits the general character of the child in question.

ADVERBS are words added to verbs, adjectives, and sometimes to other adverbs, to *express concisely an additional idea*. They differ very considerably in their particular reference and import; and the only point of similarity between them appears to be, that each stands in the place of a lengthened phrase, or a distinct clause. Thus we say, "He reads *correctly*," for "in a correct manner;" "He did it *here*," for "in this place;" "This statement is *sufficiently* explicit," for "explicit in a sufficient degree;" "They acted *very wisely*," for "in a manner distinguished by great wisdom."

Some adverbs admit of a change of form to intimate the degrees of comparison; as "soon," "sooner," "soonest." In the case of others, these degrees are expressed by the terms *more* and *most*; as "more wisely," "most wisely."

PREPOSITIONS are little words put before substantives, to show the relations of persons and things. In the sentence, "It lies *beneath* the surface of the earth," the word "beneath" shows the situation of the object spoken of, *in relation to* the surface of the earth; and in the sentence, "He went *from* London *to* York," the two

words "from," "to," point out the *course* or *direction*, of the journey.

CONJUNCTIONS are words used to join sentences, clauses of sentences, or single words, and to show the *connexion* between the *ideas* which they express. Thus in the sentence, "Thou and he are happy, because you are good," the conjunction "and" joins the words "thou," "he;" and the conjunction "because" connects the assertion, "you are good," with the former one, "Thou and he are happy," and shows, that the *goodness* of the persons in question, is the *reason* or *cause* of their happiness.

This class of words is distributed into the *Copulative* and the *Disjunctive*; the former serving to connect words or sentences, without any opposition, as "and," "because," "if;" and the latter implying opposition, in a greater or less degree, as "*Though* he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

INTERJECTIONS are words thrown in, as the name implies, between the regular parts of a sentence, to express a powerful feeling. Thus "ah!" "alas!" indicate violent grief; "pish!" "tush!" express contempt; "lo!" "behold!" "hark!" are used to call the attention, and to mark the sense which the speaker has of the importance of the subject. There are many other interjections, which need not be enumerated.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### A GENERAL VIEW OF THE GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE—*continued*.

It has been already observed, that *Syntax*, the third general division of grammar, relates to the combination of words into sentences, and the rules or usages to be observed in thus combining them.

In taking a brief review of the *rules of Syntax*, we may with advantage follow the order of the parts of

speech, though a different arrangement has been generally adopted.

With regard to the ARTICLES, we are taught, that *a* or *an* can be joined only to nouns of the *singular* number, as "A book," "A thousand," while *the* can be connected with nouns either of the *singular*, or of the *plural* number, as "The book," "The books." We are required also, to consider the influence, which the *use* or *omission* of the articles has on the import of a passage. How great a difference, for instance, is there between "He paid little attention to this statement," and "He paid *a* little attention to this statement." The former remark would be naturally used by a person, who wished to accuse another of neglect and indifference : the latter by a person wishing to repel the charge, or at the least, to extenuate it. In the following sentence, "The gay and the insinuating are often destitute of tender emotions," *two* classes of persons are mentioned ; while a different form of speaking, "The gay and insinuating are often destitute of tender emotions," naturally suggests the idea of *one* class, admitting of being characterised as both *gay* and *insinuating*. Such examples could be multiplied, did not the limits of this chapter require brevity of illustration.

In respect to the application of Syntax to SUBSTANTIVES, we have the rule, that in expressions which imply property or possession, as "My father's house," "Man's happiness," the *possessive case* is properly introduced. These expressions, however, admit of being altered to "The house of my father," "The happiness of man ;" and there are cases in which the use of the preposition "of" with its proper case, is preferable to the employment of the English possessive, as being more conducive to clearness, or to harmony of sound.

The only direction affecting ADJECTIVES, is, that every word of this class must have some substantive, either expressed or implied, to which it shall refer.

The proper application of the PERSONAL PRONOUNS, is a subject which does not require any particular rule, and which becomes exceedingly clear if it is remembered, that "I" refers to the person speaking ; "thou" or

"you" to the person addressed ; and that "he," "she," "it," which equally belong to the third person, differ in that the first is masculine, the second feminine, and the third neuter.

The use of the RELATIVE PRONOUNS, "who," "which," "that," is a subject of considerable importance to Syntax, and one respecting which several rules are usually given. It has been already noticed, that "who" can be applied only to *persons*, and "which" only to irrational animals, and objects destitute of life ; but that the third of the above pronouns, admits of being used in relation either to persons or to things.—Each of these relatives may be made to form the nominative to a verb ; and in this case, it is considered to be of the same *number* and *person* as its antecedent, or the word going before it, to which it relates. Thus in the clause, "Thou who observest equity," the term "thou" forms the antecedent to the relative "who,"—this relative is the nominative to the verb "observest,"—and this verb is made of the second person and singular number, because its nominative "*who*" is considered to take the person and number of the preceding word "thou." This use of a relative as the nominative to a verb, is only one method of construction which it admits. It may be put in any other case, and placed under the government of some other word, as in the sentence, "God, to whom we are indebted for all our blessings, and whom it is our highest interest to love and to obey." Here the relative "whom," in the second clause, is placed after, and is governed by, the preposition "to ;" and in the third clause, it is governed by the verbs, "love," "obey."—The right *position* of the relative pronouns, requires the constant attention of every student of composition ; for there are few particulars that more intimately affect the clearness and the strength of a sentence.

In regard to the ADJECTIVE PRONOUNS, there are two regulations which merit our attention :—that some of them, as "each," "every," "either," can be connected only with *singular* substantives, because they distinctly intimate *one* person or thing ;—and that the terms "this"

and "that" have a plural form, "these" and "those," which must be invariably employed with *plural* substantives. Thus we say "each person," "every man," never "each persons," "every men;" and we say also, "this book," "these books," "that transaction," "those transactions."

The proper use of *VERBS* is a subject on which several of the rules of Syntax directly bear. A verb must be regarded either as *agreeing* in number and person, with some word or words, or as *exerting a government* over other words, that form its object. In respect to the *agreement* of verbs with substantives and pronouns, we have the following leading rules:—

A Verb must be of *the same number and person* as its nominative case; as "I speak," "Thou speakest," "He speaks," "They speak."

When two nominatives singular belong *unitedly* to one verb, the verb must be *plural*; as "Socrates and Plato *were* eminent philosophers."

When a verb relates to *each* of two singular nominatives *separately*, it must be of the *singular* number; as "He or his brother *has* done this."

A singular noun of *multitude*, as "the crowd," "the fleet," "the council," should have a verb *singular*, if it suggests the idea of *one body acting in union*, but a verb *plural*, if it conveys the idea of *many individuals acting separately*; as "The meeting *was* large," "The council *were* divided in their opinions."

Respecting the *government* of Verbs, we have the two subjoined rules, of a very simple character, and admitting of being easily remembered:—Active verbs govern the *objective* case; as "I esteem *him*," "He pities *her*." One verb may govern another in the *infinitive mood*; as "He purposes to write."

With regard to the use of *ADVERBS*, the only point concerning which any direction can be given, is the *position* which they should occupy; and this must evidently be determined by a regard to the clearness and the easy flow of the sentence. Were we to say, "This declaration is explicit sufficiently," the ear would revolt at such an arrangement of the words, and the correction,

"This declaration is sufficiently explicit," would naturally suggest itself. The phrase, "He nobly acted," although it would distinctly convey the intended idea, would yet be inharmonious and repulsive: but a transposition of the words, "He acted nobly," renders it more expressive, and very agreeable to the ear. Both the arrangements, "It was carefully examined," and "It was examined carefully," are admissible and elegant; but there may occur cases, in which the one of these phrases would be preferable to the other.

Respecting **PREPOSITIONS**, we have the simple but highly important rule, that they always govern the *objective* case; as "She is displeased with *him*," "He sent to *her*."

**CONJUNCTIONS** are not to be regarded as *governing* either substantives or verbs; but it is an important observation, that they *usually* connect the same moods and tenses of verbs, and the same cases of nouns and pronouns. There is an obvious impropriety in saying, "The profession of friendship, and to act differently, must show an utter want of principle;" for although the infinitive "to act," in the second clause, is used as a substantive, yet it is quite irregular to associate this infinitive with the substantive "profession," by the copulative "and." We should certainly say, "To profess friendship, and to act differently, must show an utter want of principle."

The outline which has now been given of the Etymology and Syntax of the English language, will afford a view of its structure and usages, and will remind the student of those points, which have the most important influence on composition. A distinct treatise on English Grammar, containing minute explanations of the various topics which the study embraces, should be possessed by all who aim at mental cultivation; but a general review of these topics, with an arrangement of the rules of Syntax, more suited, perhaps, than that generally adopted, to assist the memory, may prove at once pleasing and instructive.

## CHAPTER IV.

## PUNCTUATION.

IN the arrangement of words and sentences, it is of great importance to make a right application of the several points or marks, commonly designated *stops*. Their chief use is to render the construction of a sentence clear, by showing which words relate to each other, and which are to be taken separately. They afford also considerable assistance in regard to pronunciation ; for by showing how the several parts of a sentence, and how entire sentences, stand related to each other, they direct us to the *pauses* which it is requisite to introduce.

Among the various stops, we may first notice the *Period*, ( . ) used to mark the termination of a sentence. Thus "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King."

The *Colon* ( : ) is employed to divide a sentence into different members or branches, when these members are not closely related in meaning. Thus "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib : but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

The *Semicolon* ( ; ) is used to distribute a sentence into two or more members, which yet have some connexion in meaning. "And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing ; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished, and shall hiss, because of all the plagues thereof."

The *Comma* ( , ) is used to distinguish parts of a sentence, which belong to one general branch or member, and to show which words are the most intimately connected, and which are not so dependent on each other. "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir-tree, the pine-tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary ; and I will make the place of my feet glorious."

In deciding as to the use of the semicolon or colon, in any particular instance, we must be regulated by the near or remote connexion of the members which we propose to



distribute. It is proper to write, "Straws swim on the surface : pearls lie at the bottom ;" the use of the colon in this instance, marking the two parts of the sentence as almost entirely separate, and requiring therefore a very long pause after the term "surface." But if a conjunction were introduced to join the two clauses, as "Straws swim on the surface ; *but* pearls lie at the bottom," the *semicolon* must be given ; because the conjunction serves to bring the members of the sentence into a closer connexion, and causes us to pass with a degree of rapidity from the former to the latter. There are some instances, in which either the colon or the semicolon can be employed without impropriety. Thus in the sentence already quoted from Isaiah, "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his mater's crib : *but* Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider,"—the semicolon may be introduced after "crib," although the colon appears to be on the whole preferable.

The Comma is a stop of very frequent occurrence ; and so different are the cases in which it is employed, that it is impossible to lay down particular rules respecting it, unless they are so accumulated as to perplex and burden the mind. In examining its uses, regard should be had, in every instance, to the *reason* of its introduction : and the subject may be best elucidated, by bringing forward various sentences in which it occurs, and explaining the design of its insertion.—"To act on right and holy principles, is the interest of every human being." Here a comma is put after "principles," to show that the whole clause, "to act on right and holy principles," forms the subject of the verb "is," and because the mind requires a slight relief after so lengthened an expression.—"Benevolence, like the sun, diffuses a cheering and invigorating influence." In this sentence, a comma is inserted after "benevolence," to show that it does not stand immediately connected in grammatical construction with the following words, but that it is reserved to form the nominative to the verb "diffuses ;" and the intermediate words, "like the sun," are enclosed between two commas, to show that they have no close grammatical connexion with the pre-

ceding or following terms.—“Youth, vigour, beauty, are attractive and engaging.” In this sentence a comma is introduced after each of the first three words, to fix the mind on it pointedly and distinctly, and to show that each forms a separate nominative to the verb which follows. A similar reason exists for writing “A just, virtuous, benevolent man;” for the comma inserted after each of the adjectives, “just,” “virtuous,” serves to fix the mind on them *distinctly*, and to reserve them for some substantive to be afterwards introduced. But it would be improper to write “A just, virtuous, benevolent, man,” because the grammatical connexion of the terms “benevolent” and “man,” is too intimate to allow a stop between them. “The King, approving of the scheme, commanded its immediate adoption.” In this sentence, a comma is put after “the King,” to keep these words by themselves; as belonging equally to the verb “commanded,” and the participle “approving.”—“Hope, the balm of life, soothes us under every misfortune.” In this sentence, a comma is introduced after “hope,” and another after the expression, “the balm of life,” to show us that the simple nominative “hope,” and this illustrative phrase, relate equally to the verb “soothes.” By the insertion of a comma after the first word “hope,” this term is reserved, as it were, to become the nominative to a verb to be afterwards introduced.—“To secure present emolument, he compromised his principles.” A comma is inserted between the two clauses of this sentence, because they are distinct in idea.—“I will endeavour, secondly, to trace the causes of this state of things.” The word “secondly” is here enclosed between two commas, because it is not intimately connected in meaning or grammatical construction, with the preceding or the following word; and the use of a comma after “endeavour,” keeps the mind expecting some verb of the infinitive mood to be afterwards given, to which this shall relate. These examples appear sufficient to illustrate the use of the comma in writing English, and to show the reasons of its insertion in most of the cases in which it occurs.

In addition to the points that have now been considered, there are a few others, that require a brief explanation.

The *Note of Interrogation* (?) is used, as the name itself implies, when a question is proposed. Thus "What is the cause of this procedure?" "Which course shall we choose?"

The *Note of Exclamation* (!) is employed to express *surprise* or *astonishment*. Thus we write "What a project has he undertaken!"

The *Parenthesis* ( ) is used to mark a clause introduced obliquely, if we may so speak, between the regular parts of a sentence. In the very sentence just given, the words, "if we may so speak," could have been enclosed within a parenthesis. The grammatical construction is complete without them, nor are they essential to the general import of the sentence. On the subject of clauses introduced in a parenthesis, see Chapter VI.

The *Dash* (—) is used in different cases, though its frequent introduction should be avoided. It is requisite, when there is an abrupt transition, in the middle of a sentence; as in the passage often cited,

"Here lies the great—False marble, where?  
Nothing but sordid dust lies here."

Sometimes this mark is employed after a period, when the subject of the second sentence differs considerably from that of the preceding one. Occasionally it is introduced before a quotation, as "I fully embrace that Scriptural maxim;—'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.'" In this position however, it appears to be unnecessary and objectionable. There are some other cases in which this mark is introduced, to keep the mind from passing too hastily from a word or phrase to a succeeding one.

The *Hyphen* is seen in such compound words as "lap-dog," "tea-pot," "son-in-law." It serves to unite two or more terms, so that they shall be regarded as a *single* word.

*Brackets* [ ] are employed to enclose a sentence, or a part of a sentence, which for some special reason, the writer wishes to mark as separate from the others.

The usual signs of a *Quotation* are “ ”. But when a double quotation occurs, the second is enclosed between single commas. Thus we may suppose the sentence,—He writes, “ I have lately contended for that Scriptural truth, that ‘ God hath made of one blood all nations of men.’ ”

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE CHOICE OF WORDS.

In every composition, the choice of words and phrases deserves particular regard. A judicious selection of terms is essential to the clear and elegant expression of our ideas ; and if unsuitable words are introduced, no excellence of arrangement can compensate for their impropriety.

There are four general directions, in respect to the choice of words, the importance of which will be readily perceived, and which will suffice to guide the student in his decisions.

I. *Those words only should be used, which have been sanctioned, by good authority, as belonging to the English language.* Thus the words “hauteur” and “politesse” should be discarded, and the proper English terms, “haughtiness,” “politeness,” invariably substituted for them. Many other examples could be adduced ; but it would be impracticable to bring forward every word on which this regulation bears, and in deciding the case of particular terms, the student will find it requisite to have some standard lexicon, to which he may appeal.

The rule before us may be extended, so as to censure the unnecessary insertion of phrases belonging to other languages, in the middle of sentences. Some writers evince a fondness for the occasional use of Latin or French expressions ; but in almost every instance, the ideas which they design to convey, could have been

given with equal clearness and beauty in English phraseology, and there is certainly an excellence in preserving the simple and unmixed character of sentences. To those who are unacquainted with the Latin and French languages, the introduction of phrases belonging to them, can only cause perplexity and disappointment; while those who are acquainted with them, must feel, that sentences in general flow much more smoothly and pleasingly, if confined to a single language.

II. *All low and vulgar expressions should be rejected.* Of this character are the words "pell-mell," "somehow;" and the phrases, "to shift as well as one can," "to leap from the frying-pan into the fire." Such proverbial expressions as the last here adduced, greatly disfigure a composition; and if they call forth a smile from those who are pleased with vulgarity of illustration, they excite feelings of disgust in every refined and cultivated mind.

The reason of the rule before us, must be obvious to every one who reflects on it for a moment. When an individual writes for the perusal of others, or when he delivers his sentiments for their instruction or pleasure, he is naturally expected to exert his powers of mind in the combination of ideas, and in their suitable expression; and the use of phraseology, which is condemned as low and vulgar by persons of education, shows therefore, a mind regardless of the just expectations of those, who are waiting to receive the statement of its opinions and feelings.

III. *The words employed in a sentence, should PRECISELY and CLEARLY express the intended idea.* The subject of *Precision*, as it applies to single words, deserves the close attention of the student. There are many terms in English, nearly synonymous, but having some points of difference, an accurate observance of which is intimately connected with elegance of style. The term *pride*, for instance, simply denotes an undue self-esteem; and it must be distinguished from *vanity*, which intimates a desire of applause. Between the terms *wisdom* and *prudence*, there is a very obvious difference. The former is a general term, embracing a reference to exten-

sive knowledge, acute discernment, and a right application of this knowledge and discernment to the purposes of human life ; the latter has a more limited reference, simply pointing out that skill in action, by which evils are avoided, and good is secured. A distinction exists between the words, *eminent*, *distinguished*, *illustrious*, though all three have the same leading import. The first, which owes its origin to the Latin verb *emineo*, "to stand forth," "to be prominent," suggests the idea of a person taking the lead among others, or possessing acknowledged excellence and superiority ; the second, which etymologically means, "marked as separate," or simply, "separated," "placed distinctly from others," conveys the idea of acknowledged excellence, but does not so forcibly express decided *prominence*, as the former word ; whilst *illustrious*, derived from the Latin adjective *illustis*, the primary meaning of which is "filled with light," "encircled with light," conveys the idea of high reputation and excellence, under a different view from that in which it is placed by either of the other terms. These examples will suffice to illustrate the advantages of attending to the exact import of every term, and of discriminating between words which have a general similarity, but which are yet marked by several minute differences.

A precise use of words must obviously depend, in a great degree, on precision and accuracy of thought. The first business of every writer, is to think with propriety and distinctness ; and then to inquire, whether the terms which suggest themselves to his mind, do exactly express the ideas which he designs to convey.

It is of great importance, that *Clearness*, as well as precision, should be regarded in the choice of words ; and that every expression which would render the meaning of a writer unintelligible, or involve it in partial obscurity, should be avoided. Several words have two or more meanings, not only distinct from each other, but, to a certain extent, opposite and contradictory. Thus the word *mortal* generally means "liable," or "subject, to death ;" while in some passages, it means "occasioning death," "deadly," "destructive." The assertion,

"Man is frail and mortal," in which the term occurs in the former acceptation, involves no obscurity, because the connexion sufficiently shows its import; nor is there the slightest obscurity in the statement, "He received a mortal wound," for every one must understand the term "mortal," in this passage, as conveying the import of "fatal," "deadly." But were we to say, "That animal is noxious and mortal," this use of the last adjective would be injudicious, because when we speak of animals being mortal, we usually understand this term in the sense of *liable to death*, and never assign to it, unless the connexion forbids every other interpretation, the import of *destructive*.

A regard to clearness will naturally suggest *the impropriety of using the same word in different significations, in the course of a single sentence*. The word "charity," for instance, sometimes expresses general benevolence towards mankind, founded on a devotional regard to God; but in familiar conversation, and in writing, it is frequently employed to denote almsgiving. Any sentence, therefore, in which this word should occur in each of these acceptations, would be chargeable with a want of perspicuity, and would not present that easy and natural flow of thought, which is one great ornament of style.

The observance of clearness, in the selection of words and phrases, will guard a writer against *the unsuitable use of technical terms*. There are certain expressions peculiar to every science and profession, and understood only by those, who have made that science or profession, an object of special inquiry. In relation to the sciences of anatomy and medicine, for instance, terms are used by those who write professionally, which are altogether unintelligible to the majority of readers. The following sentence affords an illustration of this remark: "The eruptions assume an erythrematic character, running into each other, and do not suppurate kindly, but contain an ichorous brownish matter; the swelling of the face, and the salivary discharge commence earlier, typhoid symptoms make their appearance, and often petechiæ are observed on the skin." In treatises on particular

sciences, technical terms are evidently proper ; because when their meaning has been clearly explained to the student, he is enabled to attach to them a definite idea, and their use obviates the necessity of circumlocutions which would be awkward and wearisome. But in writings not designed for persons of a particular profession, every unnecessary deviation from common phraseology is censurable, because it has a tendency to perplex the minds of general readers.

IV. *The words employed in any composition, should be suited to the subject treated of, and to the designed character and effect of the composition itself.*

In illustration of this general principle, let us first take the case of a narrative, designed to instruct and to please. Now it must be obvious, that the words employed in such a narrative, should be plain and simple, and should intimate a comparative want of effort on the part of the writer. The parable of Nathan to David, presents a fine example of interesting simplicity of narrative. "There were two men in one city, the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds : but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up ; and it grew up together with him, and with his children ; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him ; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him."—In this relation, there is no apparent effort, but a simple, unadorned statement of the supposed transaction ; and yet this statement insinuates itself into the mind, and powerfully calls forth the sentiment of pity for the poor man whose rights were trampled upon, and whose feelings were outraged, and the emotion of indignation against the rich oppressor.

Let us now take a beautiful example of an instructive and persuasive address, characterised by simplicity, and yet possessing great dignity of style. "Behold the



fowls of the air ; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns : yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit unto his stature ? And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin ; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these." This passage is convincing, without presenting any attempt at powerful diction ; and the words employed are suited to the simple majesty of the Saviour's character.

An example of a different kind may now be adduced, from a theological writer, enforcing with great sublimity of thought and language, the greatness of that display of the Divine love to man, which is afforded by the scheme of redemption. "Go to the heavens, which canopy man with grandeur, cheer his steps with successive light, and mark his festivals by their chronology ; go to the atmosphere, which invigorates his spirits, and is to him the breath of life ; go to the smiling fields, decked with verdure for his eye, and covered with fruits for his sustenance ; go to every scene which spreads beauty before his gaze, which is made harmoniously vocal to his ear, which fills and delights the imagination by its glow, or by its greatness ; we travel with you, we admire with you, we feel and enjoy with you, we adore with you, but we stay not with you. We hasten onward in search of a demonstration more convincing, that 'God is love ;' and we rest not till we press into the strange, the mournful, the joyful scenes of Calvary, and amidst the throng of invisible and astonished angels, weeping disciples, and the mocking multitude, under the arch of the darkened heaven, and with earth trembling beneath our feet, we gaze upon the meek, the resigned, but fainting Sufferer, and exclaim, '*Herein* is love,'—*Herein*, and no where else is it so affectingly, so unequivocally, demonstrated,—'not that we loved God ; but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins !'"—In the perusal of this passage, the mind is impressed and overwhelmed ; the beauties of nature are

first depicted so as to interest the imagination, and the emotions which these beauties should excite, are almost inspired by the forcible and sublime language in which they are expressed ; and then, with the powers of contemplation raised to the highest point of exertion, the mind passes to the scenes of Calvary, surrounded with a more impressive dignity, and rendered at once awful and engaging, by their displays of the combined holiness and benevolence of the Most High. The words employed are grand and sublime ; but the majesty of the subject, and the design of the address, not only justify, but require, this elevated diction.

The examples which have now been brought forward, may suffice to illustrate the general principle before us, that in the choice of words, a writer should have respect to the nature of the subject, and the end which he proposes to effect. Impassioned and sublime language is not suited to narratives, or courses of argument ; and it is equally improper to use the plainness of history, or the deliberate phraseology of studied reasonings, on occasions which excite the passions, and call forth irregular efforts of the understanding.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE FORMATION OF SENTENCES.

Our inquiries into English Composition, must now be particularly directed to the formation of sentences. A judicious selection of words, however essential to propriety and beauty, cannot render a production elegant, unless the periods of which it is composed, are correctly and pleasingly arranged.

A sentence may perhaps be defined “ a collection of words, formed to express either *one* idea, or *several* ideas having *an intimate connexion*.” There are some sentences, which contain only one statement, and which are therefore, properly designated *simple* : thus we have “ Jesus wept,”—“ Life is short.” Most periods, how-

ever, embrace several statements; because the human mind, when its powers are called forth into exercise, naturally associates ideas, and instead of advancing short and broken assertions, unfolds its views in one continued train.

In considering the formation of sentences, there are two leading subjects which demand our attention. The first is, *the distribution of our ideas between different sentences*; the second is, *the correct arrangement of the several parts of a single sentence*. When an individual composes on any subject, he has to consider, in what order his ideas shall be presented,—which of them shall be associated in a single period,—and which of them shall be separated by being placed in different sentences. And it is a perfectly distinct object of attention, so to form and combine the several parts of a single sentence, that the period shall produce the best effect on the mind of the reader. The first of the subjects now stated, will occupy the limits of the present chapter; and the second must be reserved for a subsequent part of this treatise.

The distribution of our ideas between different sentences, should be regulated by the *natural connexion* of these ideas, or their want of connexion, and by *the order* in which they suggest themselves to the mind. A single example from an approved writer, will remove all obscurity from this general principle. In No. 172 of the Rambler, Dr. Johnson has the following remarks:—“The common charge against those who rise above their original condition, is that of pride. It is certain that success naturally confirms us in a favorable opinion of our own abilities. Scarce any man is willing to allot to accident, friendship, and a thousand causes, which concur in every event, without human contrivance or interposition, the part which they may justly claim in his advancement. We rate ourselves by our fortune rather than our virtues, and exorbitant claims are quickly produced by imaginary merit. But captiousness and jealousy are likewise easily offended, and to him who studiously looks for an affront, every mode of behaviour will supply it; freedom will be rudeness, and reserve sullenness; mirth will be negligence, and seriousness formality;

when he is received with ceremony, distance and respect are inculcated; if he is treated with familiarity, he concludes himself insulted by condescensions."—In the first of these sentences, it is simply stated, that those who rise above their original condition are frequently charged with pride. In the second, the Doctor proceeds to inquire, how far this charge is merited, and he lays down a principle as to the natural influence of success in the mind of its possessor. The *reason* of this influence is traced in the two following periods; which close the remarks that are adduced in support of the charge in question. The next sentence embraces considerations which show that frequently this charge is unfounded; and these considerations are properly included in one sentence, because they all relate to the erroneous impressions which certain modes of behaviour may produce, when candour has given place to captiousness and jealousy.

In addition to the general principle now laid down and illustrated, one or two particular rules, relating to the formation of a series of sentences, may perhaps be given with advantage. The first of these is, that *it is improper to introduce in one sentence, ideas which have very little connexion with each other*. Dr. Blair has selected a striking instance of this fault, in the following sentence taken from a translation of Plutarch: "Their march was through an uncultivated country, whose savage inhabitants fared hardly, having no other riches than a breed of lean sheep, whose flesh was rank and unsavoury, by reason of their continual feeding upon sea-fish." No one who reads this sentence attentively can fail to perceive the injurious effect of the repeated change of the subject. The mind is first directed to the uncultivated character of the country, through which the army spoken of marched, and to the hard fare of its inhabitants. These ideas certainly are nearly related; but when the writer leads us forward to a description of the sheep of the country, and assigns the reason of the unsavouriness of their flesh, he introduces topics which the mind *cannot* consider in connexion with the march of the army first presented to its view.

How much more suitably would the two subjoined sentences have conveyed his ideas: "Their march was through an uncultivated country, whose savage inhabitants lived on the hardest fare. The only riches of these unpolished tribes was a breed of lean sheep, the flesh of which was rank and unsavoury, by reason of their continual feeding on sea-fish."—An equally striking instance of the improper association of ideas which have no connexion may be seen in the subjoined passage. "Archbishop Tillotson died in this year. He was exceedingly beloved by King William and Queen Mary, who nominated Dr. Tennison, Bishop of Lincoln, to succeed him." There is obviously no connexion between the affection which the King and Queen had to Archbishop Tillotson, and the nomination of his successor; but it would have been perfectly natural, to connect the mention of this affection, with the statement of the death of the Archbishop; because the mind is easily led from contemplating the death of a person, to survey his character, and the esteem and favour with which he was regarded during life. The sentences brought forward may be rectified in the following manner. "In this year died Archbishop Tillotson,—a prelate exceedingly beloved by King William and Queen Mary. His successor was Dr. Tennison, Bishop of Lincoln."

A *second* direction on the general subject before us, is, *not to introduce in a parenthesis, a remark which could properly be made to form a distinct and perfect sentence.* A passage cited by a good writer on Composition, clearly shows the awkward effect which such a parenthesis must have. "If your hearts secretly reproach you for the wrong choice you have made, (as there is time for repentance and retreat; and a return to wisdom is always honorable,) bethink yourselves that the evil is not irreparable." Now the ideas here introduced in the parenthesis, serve to interrupt the regular course of thought; and certainly they are not so intimately connected with the preceding and subsequent parts of the period, as not to admit of being reserved to form a distinct sentence. The following correction claims our adoption: "If your hearts secretly reproach you for

the wrong choice you have made, bethink yourselves that the evil is not irreparable. Still there is time for repentance and retreat ; and a return to wisdom is always honorable."

Perhaps the question may arise, whether a parenthesis is not in *every* case, unnecessary, and whether the ideas which some writers thus introduce, may not be invariably reserved to form a subsequent sentence. To this inquiry we are disposed to answer in the negative. When the imagination and the feelings are strongly excited, a thought may rush on the mind, intimately connected with the leading idea, and serving to add to its effect, but which, if deferred to another period, would lose its power and impressiveness. This thought it may not be possible, more especially in poetry, to introduce in the regular grammatical order of a period ; and in such a case, recourse may properly be had to a parenthesis. An instance of this we have in the following passage ;

" And was the ransom paid? It was; and paid  
(What can exalt the bounty more?) for thee."

The idea of the undeserved and unexampled kindness which was evinced in the paying of the ransom, is here most appropriately brought forward. The sudden and abrupt transition from the general statement that the ransom was paid, to the inquiry, "What can exalt the bounty more?" marks a vigorous and strongly excited state of feeling ; and when after this inquiry, the statement is resumed, the mind rests with fixed attention on the words "for thee," and the destitution, the guilt, the misery, of the person succoured, are thus most emphatically intimated.

The observance of the two rules that have now been illustrated, will secure that which is usually termed the *Unity* of a sentence. That the character of unity should belong to a sentence, must be evident ; for it implies only that which is expressed in the definition of a sentence,—that it is "a collection of words, formed to express either *one* idea, or several ideas having an *intimate connexion*."

In the arrangement of a series of sentences, particular care should be taken to render the *transition* from one to another, natural and easy. There is ordinarily a connexion in sentiment, between the several sentences which form a paragraph; and these sentences should be so associated, that the relations of the ideas which they convey, may be distinctly and readily perceived. In illustration of this subject, let us investigate a passage, brought forward by an approved writer on the English language, as correct and elegant: "In yesterday's paper, we showed that every thing which is great, new, or beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination with pleasure. We must own, that it is impossible for us to assign the efficient cause of this pleasure, because we know not the nature either of an idea or of the human soul. All that we can do, therefore, in speculations of this kind, is to reflect on the operations of the soul which are most agreeable, and to range under proper heads, what is pleasing or displeasing to the mind."—The transition from the first to the second of these sentences, is far from being easy and agreeable. The expression, "we must own," is one adapted to introduce a distinct statement; and until the sentence is considerably advanced, its connexion with the preceding one does not become apparent. By an alteration similar to the following, this impropriety may be removed: "In yesterday's paper, we showed that every thing which is great, new, or beautiful, is apt to affect the imagination with pleasure. The efficient cause of this pleasure, is, however, placed beyond our research; because we know not the nature either of an idea, or of the human soul."

The beauty of a composition obviously depends to a very considerable extent, on the manner in which its periods are associated. If an arrangement is adopted, which serves to obscure, rather than to elucidate, the connexion of the several sentences, the mind can experience little pleasure in their perusal; but if, as the composition proceeds, there is an easy flow of thought and language, uninterrupted by hasty and abrupt transitions, the understanding and the ear are equally gratified.

In the association of several sentences, it is of im-

portance to preserve a degree of *variety*. When there occurs a long train of periods similarly constructed, the mind is fatigued by the uniformity; but relief and pleasure are afforded, both to the understanding and the ear, by the combination of sentences of different length, and displaying variety in the arrangement of their several parts. If this general principle is constantly borne in mind, it will be found comparatively easy to comply with it. Variety of idea will naturally induce variety of expression. Occasionally a simple statement is to be advanced; sometimes a sentence must embrace a proposition, and an argument designed to confirm or establish it; sometimes a course of reasoning is to be entered upon, in relation to a topic already stated; sometimes an inference, or conclusion, is to be drawn from observations extending through several preceding periods; and in all these cases, together with many others which might have been enumerated, different modes of arrangement will readily suggest themselves to the mind. The following passage, extracted from the Rev. Robert Hall's sermon on Modern Infidelity, affords an interesting example of variety of style:—  
“ More than all, their infatuated eagerness, their parricidal zeal to extinguish a sense of Deity, must excite astonishment and horror. Is the idea of an almighty and perfect Ruler unfriendly to any passion which is consistent with innocence, or an obstruction to any design which it is not shameful to avow? Eternal God, on what are thine enemies intent! What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness, which the eye of heaven must not pierce!—Miserable men! Proud of being the offspring of chance; in love with universal disorder; whose happiness is involved in the belief of there being no witness to their designs; and who are at ease, only because they suppose themselves inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world!”



## CHAPTER VII.

THE FORMATION OF SENTENCES—*continued.*

IN the preceding chapter, our views were directed to the proper distribution of our ideas between different sentences, and to some considerations relating to the union of several sentences in one series. The subject which now claims our attention, is the proper formation of a sentence considered alone,—the correct arrangement of the several parts of a single period.

The leading requisites of a single sentence, are *Precision*, *Clearness*, *Strength*, and a *Natural Arrangement of Ideas*. Without *precision*, a sentence must be partially *erroneous*; because it does not fully and exactly convey the ideas of its author. Without *clearness*, a sentence may be regarded as almost *useless*; because the ideas expressed, however excellent and appropriate, cannot be properly apprehended by those to whom they are addressed. Without *strength*, a sentence must be comparatively *uninteresting*; since it can possess little, calculated to call forth the attention, or impress the understanding. Nor is the last particular of inferior importance; for unless the arrangement of ideas in a sentence, accords, in some degree, with that order in which they naturally occur to the mind, the attention of the reader will be interrupted, and instead of being interested and gratified, his mind will turn from the composition before him, with a degree of weariness and satiety.

The subject of *Precision* has already been considered in relation to single words and phrases; and it must be obvious, that an attention to precision, in the selection of words, is essential to the precision of a sentence, or an entire composition. If a writer should introduce the word *vanity*, to express the idea properly intimated by *pride*, the sentence in which this occurred, would involve a want of precision; because it could not convey the exact meaning of the writer, to any one who should understand the term *vanity* in its received import. In

this case, propriety would be violated only by the employment of an erroneous term; but this single error would render the whole sentence chargeable with inaccuracy. A regard to precision, in the arrangement of a sentence, will prevent the use of superfluous expressions. Words should not be accumulated without conveying additional ideas, or serving more fully to unfold one which had been briefly advanced; and when they are unnecessarily multiplied, they preclude the easy apprehension of the meaning of the writer. Let us suppose the following sentence; "The real, unfeigned, and sincere Christian has true pleasure and enjoyment in the delightful anticipation and hope of a better and superior state." How ridiculous must this appear to every one accustomed to propriety of language, or trained to associate ideas with words! Such a person, when the epithets "real," "unfeigned," "sincere," have passed before him, feels at a loss to comprehend the reason of their use; when again, he meets with the expression, "true pleasure and enjoyment," he pauses to find out some difference of import between the two substantives, which the writer may have intended to mark by their combination; and when, in proceeding through the sentence, he meets with the adjective "delightful," expressing an idea before conveyed,—then with the two words "anticipation" and "hope," the one of which is obviously superfluous,—and lastly with the adjectives, "better," "superior,"—he turns away from such a style of writing with disgust. The ideas which the above sentence expresses, may be fully and pleasingly conveyed in the following manner; "The sincere Christian has true enjoyment in the hope of a better state."—Precision is not, however, entirely inconsistent with copiousness of diction; for if the phrases employed differ in their import, and require to be taken together, in order to the full developement of the meaning of the author, there is obviously no violation of the principles which we have laid down. In a dignified and lofty style, it is frequently of service, to introduce in the first place, a strong expression, and then to advance a second, carry-

ing the views yet farther, and presenting a more grand and impressive image to the mind. This remark is exemplified in the subjoined sentence, extracted from the Rev. Robert Hall's admired sermon on Modern Infidelity. "When we consider the incredible vanity of the atheistical sect, together with the settled malignity and unrelenting rancour, with which they pursue every vestige of religion, is it uncandid to suppose, that its humbling tendency is one principal cause of their enmity; that they are eager to displace a Deity from the minds of men, that they may occupy the void; to crumble the throne of the Eternal into dust, that they may elevate themselves on its ruins?" The beauty and sublimity of this passage require no illustration; it impresses the imagination and the judgment; and the concluding member, in particular, carries our views of the haughty aspirings of the professors of atheism, to the very highest point.

*Clearness or Perspicuity* is a quality of the highest importance in every species of composition. It is impossible for language to instruct, to please, or to persuade, unless its meaning is obvious; and a series of sentences requiring long continued thought, in order to the discovery of their import, cannot fail to produce weariness and disgust. On the other hand, when every sentiment is readily apprehended, and an entire course of observations is made perfectly clear, the mind experiences real pleasure. The study of clearness in the arrangement of a sentence, will lead us to place every clause and expression in immediate connexion with the terms to which it relates, and to separate it from any other clause or phrase, to which it might be erroneously referred, were not its position thus carefully guarded. A few sentences will illustrate this rule, and will show its importance. "Though energetic brevity is not adapted alike to every subject, we ought to avoid its contrary, on every occasion, a languid redundancy of words." According to the present arrangement of this sentence, the phrase, "on every occasion," appears to relate to the word "contrary," so as to imply, that on every occasion, a languid redundancy of words is the contrary of

energetic brevity. Now no person could mean formally to make this statement ; for if a languid redundancy of words is at any time, the opposite to energetic brevity, it must be so on every occasion. The designed import of the passage, requires the following order ; “ Though energetic brevity is not adapted alike to every subject, we ought, on every occasion, to avoid its contrary, a languid redundancy of words.”—A sentence, adduced by Dr. Blair, shows how the import of a sentence may be rendered obscure, by an erroneous or negligent arrangement : “ The Romans understood liberty, at least, as well as we.” If in the perusal of this passage, an emphasis is given to the term *liberty*, the meaning of the sentence will be, that whatever other subjects we understand in greater perfection than the Romans, their views of liberty were as clear and correct as ours ; but if, in the reading of the sentence, an emphasis is placed on the adverbial phrase *at least*, and afterwards on the expression *as well*, the meaning will be, that on the subject of liberty, the views of the Romans were equal, if not superior, to our own.—“ There are thousands of labourers, in this country, whose support is connected with our naval transactions.” According to the present form of this sentence, it may be made a question, whether the relative *whose* has respect to the expression, “ Thousands of labourers,” or to the phrase, “ this country.” A simple transposition of the words will remove all ambiguity, and render the sentence more pleasing and harmonious. “ There are in this country, thousands of labourers, whose support is connected with our naval transactions.” From these examples it is obvious, that the relative position of the members of a sentence, has the greatest influence on its clearness or obscurity ; and that in determining what arrangements should be adopted, we should endeavour to bring those words which are most intimately related in meaning, into the most intimate connexion. In the use of *adverbs*, and of the *relative pronouns*, the greatest care should be taken to preserve a perspicuous arrangement ; for an erroneous position of these parts of speech can scarcely fail to confuse the meaning of a period.

The third requisite of an elegant sentence, is *Strength*,—a vigorous and energetic mode of expressing the ideas designed to be conveyed. All sentences do not equally require this quality of style; but unless some of the periods of a composition are powerful and striking, and unless the sense is at all times brought out to advantage, the attention of the reader cannot long be kept up, nor can his feelings be interested and affected. In order to secure the strength of a sentence, it is of importance to avoid all expressions that are wholly superfluous. Not only do such expressions call off the attention from the words on which the force of a sentence depends, but they weary the mind, and render it less fit for receiving impressions. Another direction for promoting the strength of a sentence is, to observe the appropriate use of conjunctions, and every other class of words, employed to associate the several parts of a sentence. In the following passage of the apostle Paul, the repetition from the conjunction “nor,” gives *distinctness* and *weight* to every particular introduced: “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” How much would the declaration of the Apostle have suffered in power and energy, had he written, “I am persuaded, that death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, and every other creature, are unable to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” On the other hand, in the sentence, “I came, I saw, I conquered,” the absence of conjunctions promotes a rapid transition of thought, and marks the *celerity* of the proceedings of the illustrious general who employed it.

The strength of a sentence is likewise, considerably influenced by the position of its most important words. It is very clear, that the commencement of a sentence affords an excellent opportunity of introducing an idea, that requires particular prominence; and it is also obvious, that some of the most emphatic words, should

generally be reserved for the close of a period, because on this part, the attention naturally dwells. This remark may be extended to the arrangement of the words of a single clause, or member, of a sentence; because the attention is evidently arrested by the terms first presented to the mind, and it rests on those which occur immediately before a pause. We may take in illustration, the following beautiful passage of Robert Hall: "The devout man loves to lie low at the footstool of his Creator, because it is then he attains the most lively perceptions of the Divine excellence, and the most tranquil confidence in the Divine favor. In so august a presence, he sees all distinctions lost, and all beings reduced to the same level. He looks at his superiors without envy, and his inferiors without contempt; and when from this elevation he descends to mix in society, the conviction of superiority, which must in many instances be felt, is a calm inference of the understanding, and no longer a busy, importunate passion of the heart." If this passage is carefully perused, the position of the most important words will be seen to have a powerful influence on its elegance and strength. In the first sentence, the attention is immediately engaged by the words, "the devout man," and then it dwells on the term "Creator," which terminates this clause; and as the period proceeds, the mind rests with pleasure on the two impressive phrases, "the Divine excellence," "the Divine favor." The power and beauty of the second sentence, obviously depend, to a very considerable extent, on the position of the phrase, "in so august a presence." Had the sentence been arranged, "He sees all distinctions lost in so august a presence, and all beings reduced to the same level," the interesting image presented by the words, "in so august a presence," would have lost its effect; and the connexion between the expressions, "all distinctions lost," and "all beings reduced to the same level," would not have been so pleasingly intimated. In the third sentence, a beautiful opposition is presented between the words "envy" and "contempt,"—and between the expressions, "a calm inference of the understanding," and "a busy, importun-

ate passion of the heart ; and according to the present arrangement of the sentence, the mind traces with ease and pleasure, the course of ideas which the writer communicates, and every one of these ideas rests on it with weight and emphasis.—The influence which the arrangement of words has on the power of a sentence, is evident also from the subjoined passage of the Rev. Richard Watson. After a description of the felicity to which man may be raised, even in this state of imperfection and suffering, by the influence of piety, this distinguished writer says, " Into this state any individual may be raised ; and what is thus made possible to us by Divine goodness, is of that attribute an adorable manifestation." How perceptibly would this sentence be weakened, were the former member of it placed in the following form, " Any individual may be raised into this state ;" and how would the energy of the latter remark be lessened, by the subjoined arrangement, although more in accordance with the general usages of our language, " And what Divine goodness has thus rendered possible to us, is an adorable manifestation of that attribute." When we read, " And what is thus made possible to us by Divine goodness, is of that attribute an adorable manifestation," we find that in the former clause, the most conspicuous place is given to the leading idea,—*Divine goodness considered as manifested*,—and that in the latter clause, the words are arranged, so that the idea of the *exhibition* of Divine benevolence becomes prominent, and so that the voice may rest with peculiar force, on each of the terms "*adorable*," and "*manifestation*." Thus although these words are arranged unusually, and without that soft and easy harmony which distinguishes some productions, they possess great energy, and are in accordance with the extraordinary mental vigour of their author.—Another sentence will throw additional light on the subject before us : " To raise the mental energies, without giving to them a right impulse, and bringing them under the guidance of virtuous principles, is to effect that which may prove a source of unhappiness ; but when to mental elevation is added moral improvement, the effects of education are obviously felicitous,

both to the individual who is the subject of it, and to every one who may come within the sphere of his influence." In considering this period, let our attention be simply directed to the clause, "but when to mental elevation is added moral improvement." The great advantage of the present arrangement appears to be, that the two objects of regard, *mental elevation*, and *moral improvement*, are presented to the mind in a distinct and emphatic manner,—and that the latter, which is evidently the one on which the force of the passage depends, occupies the most commanding situation which could be assigned to it. The author of this sentence could have said, "When mental elevation and moral improvement are connected;" or he could have said, "When moral improvement is added to mental elevation," but neither of these expressions has that dignity and weight, which belong to the arrangement that he has chosen.

The fourth leading requisite of an elegant sentence, is a *Natural Arrangement of Ideas*. To this particular it is scarcely possible to assign too great importance. Not only is pleasure afforded, when ideas are presented in a regular course, and so that their mutual connexion is readily perceived, but an attention to the order which our ideas have in the mind, is necessary to give clearness and strength to any composition. The great reason, indeed, of the power and beauty of many passages, is to be found in the suitability of their arrangement to the natural order of our thoughts. A few examples will render this subject clear and interesting. The exclamation of the excited multitude of Ephesus, is given to us in this form, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." In the enthusiasm of their feelings, the idea which most strongly impressed their minds, was the *greatness*, the power and dignity, of their supposed goddess. This idea was therefore that which they would *first* express; so that the present position of the adjective *great*, is essential to the regular arrangement of the sentence. If a transposition is made, "Diana of the Ephesians is great," the power of the sentence is lost, and the exclamation appears almost ridiculous.—The address of the apostle Peter to the lame man who solicited alms of him,



is natural and emphatic; "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I unto thee." The man who requested his bounty, had his mind fixed on the money which he hoped to receive; and to meet this idea, as well as to give force to the statement, that the assistance which he had to bestow was not of this character, the Apostle first introduces the words "silver and gold." Had the sentence been thus formed, "I have not silver and gold; but I give unto thee such as I have," the natural order of thought would have been interfered with, and all beauty and strength would have been taken from the passage.—The arrangement of a sentence before adduced, will serve further to illustrate this subject: "Into this state any individual may be raised; and what is thus made possible to us by Divine goodness, is of that attribute an adorable manifestation." This period, it must be recollected, immediately follows a description of the felicitous state of the individual, whose heart is surrendered to the guidance of piety; and thus the idea of *the state described* still rested on the mind of the author. The arrangement of the first clause, "Into this state any individual may be raised," accords with the prominence of this idea; and a different arrangement, "Any individual may be raised into this state," would be perfectly unnatural and ridiculous.—The following sentence is brought forward by an esteemed writer on the English language, as presenting an inaccurate arrangement; "What I had the opportunity of mentioning to my friend, sometime ago, in conversation, was not a new thought." The critic in question objects to this sentence, because the two circumstances, "sometime ago," and "in conversation," are brought together, so as to injure their effect; and he suggests the following alteration, "What I had the opportunity sometime ago, of mentioning to my friend, in conversation, was not a new thought." Now the true reason of the superiority of the latter arrangement, is, that the idea of the *time* of the opportunity, intimated by the phrase, "sometime ago," naturally occurs to the mind in connexion with the idea of the opportunity itself, and thus the phrase before us should follow the word "opportunity," and should not

be deferred until after another idea has been introduced. The expression "in conversation," likewise, should be placed as near as possible to the clause "of mentioning to my friend," because the ideas which these phrases suggest, are analogous.—These remarks will suffice to illustrate the general doctrine, that in the arrangement of a sentence, the order of ideas should be followed as far as the usages of the language will permit; and they show, too, the intimate connexion of a natural arrangement of ideas with the clearness, and strength, and beauty, of every composition.

The *harmony* of sentences is a topic, that does not require lengthened illustration, and respecting which no particular rules can be given. An accurate ear, naturally formed for the discrimination of sounds, is the only guide to this kind of elegance. When a series of sentences can be made to flow smoothly, without any injury to the clearness or the power of the ideas, this melodious combination of periods should be adopted; but on no occasion, should perspicuity of expression, or vigour of thought, give place to softness and elegance of sound. The following passage, taken from the works of the Rev. Robert Hall, affords a striking instance of energetic sentiments, combined with great smoothness of language. "Many, without renouncing the profession of Christianity, without formally rejecting its distinguishing doctrines, live in such an habitual violation of its laws, and contradiction to its spirit, that, conscious they have more to fear than to hope from its truth, they are never able to contemplate it without terror. It haunts their imagination, instead of tranquillising their hearts, and hangs with depressing weight on all their enjoyments and pursuits. Their religion, instead of comforting them under their troubles, is itself their greatest trouble, from which they seek refuge in the dissipation and vanity of the world, until the throbs and tumults of conscience force them back upon religion. Thus suspended betwixt opposite powers, the sport of contradictory influences, they are disqualified for the happiness of both worlds; and enjoy neither the pleasures of sin, nor the peace of piety."

The adaptation of the sound of a period to the sense which it conveys, is an object which may, to a certain extent, engage the attention of an author, studious of highly finished literary beauty. In descriptive writing, when sounds are spoken of, or motion is represented, some similarity in the words to the sounds intimated, or some correspondence in the slow or rapid movement of the words, to the slow or rapid motion which they are designed to express, may be properly studied. When subjects which call forth deep reflection and solemn feeling, are introduced, a combination of words, moving slowly and with dignity, should be used; and on the other hand, when lively and vigorous emotions are expressed, the terms employed to intimate them, should move with a degree of rapidity and animation. . The two following passages, taken from our authorized version of the Sacred Scriptures, will illustrate these remarks. "And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The movement of this sentence is solemn and impressive; and although simple and unostentatious in its structure, the period is eminently adapted to intimate the awful solemnity of the occasion. The subjoined sentence presents a lively and animated style, suited to the joyous feelings with which it may be supposed to be read;—"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Sion, Thy God reigneth."

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE.—THE FIGURES OF THE IMAGINATION.

THE name of *Figures* has been given to various forms of speaking, which involve a departure from simplicity of expression. When our Saviour says in

relation to Herod, "Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected," he intimates the *craft* of this wicked prince, not by a direct statement, but by comparing him to the animal most distinguished for cunning. When again, the apostle Paul, after describing the Christian's consummated glory, in the reunion of the body and the spirit, exclaims, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" he employs the language of strong and ardent feeling, and is evidently carried far beyond the simplicity of narrative or reasoning.

In our inquiries into the general subject of figurative language, it will not be necessary to consider at length, the *case of Tropes*, or *Figures of Words*. When a term passes from its primary acceptation or reference, to one allied to it, this derived method of use is said to involve a *Trope*. Thus the word "*hard*" is primarily applied to *physical objects* which cannot be penetrated without difficulty; as "a hard rock," "a hard tree." But this term is transferred to other things, as "a hard heart," "a hard undertaking," "a hard winter," "a hard lot." In the first of these expressions, it occurs in the sense of *cruel, unfeeling*; in the second, it conveys the idea of *difficulty of accomplishment*; in the third, it intimates *severe, rigorous*; and in the fourth, it implies *unhappy, painful*. All these applications of the term before us are designated *Tropes*; and it will be obvious, then, that every language must, in the very nature of things, abound in tropes, or figures of words. The leading exercise of the human mind, is the association of ideas; and these derived acceptations of words only illustrate those methods of associating ideas, which prevail among a people.

Figurative language, considered as the opposite to a simple expression of our ideas, may be regarded as the language either of the *imagination*, or of the *passions*. When, in addressing the Deity, I say, "Thou art my rock and my fortress," there is evidently an exercise of the *imagination*, suggesting those objects which are the most formed for continued defence,—a rock and a

fortress,—and presenting these objects as illustrative of the protecting care of the Supreme Being. On the other hand, the subjoined passage of Milton, forming a part of the soliloquy of Satan, is the language of vehement *passion*, and exhibits a mind agitated with rage, and with a dread of still increasing punishment, unalleviated by a single ray of hope :—

“ Me miserable! which way shall I fly  
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?  
Which way I fly, is hell, myself am hell;  
And in the lowest depth, a lower deep,  
Still threatening to devour me, opens wide,  
To which the hell I suffer, seems a heaven.”

This view of figurative language,—that it is the language either of the imagination or of the passions,—will readily explain its *origin*, and account for its frequent introduction in familiar conversation, and in almost every species of writing. The thinking faculty is seldom perceived in language, in its calm and uninfluenced exercise; the workings of the imagination blend themselves with the perceptions of the understanding, and the decisions of the judgment; and the impulses of feeling must, according to the present constitution of human nature, exert an influence on the expression of our ideas. All the powers of the human mind, and all the emotions by which it can be actuated, are occasionally seen in composition. As a discourse proceeds, we discover the faculties of apprehending, of combining, of discriminating ideas, in their united exercise; the efforts of the imagination, are seen in the suggestion of images, calculated to illustrate the sentiments conveyed; and the various passions of the mind, love, sorrow, fear, indignation, anger, exultation, and others which the subjects treated of, may be calculated to excite, naturally unfold themselves in modes of expression, very far removed from the plainness of deliberate thought.

All the figures of language, may therefore, be considered under the two general divisions of *Figures of the Imagination*, and *Figures of Passion*. Not only is this distribution admissible, as not being inconsistent

with their nature and origin, but the observance of it seems requisite to distinctness of thought. The use of the former class of figures must be regulated by certain principles and rules, all of which cannot apply to the latter; and the use of the latter must be determined by certain principles, arising from their own peculiar character, and not strictly applicable to the use of the former.

The leading figures of the *Imagination*, are the five which follow,—Metaphor, Allegory, Comparison, Personification, and Antithesis.

*Metaphor* is seen in a beautiful expression before adduced, "Thou art my rock and my fortress." In this example, there is evidently a comparison between the Being addressed, and a rock and a fortress as the objects best adapted for defence. This comparison, if fully stated, would have required the sentence, "Thou, like a rock or a fortress, dost afford me protection:" but the sentiment is conveyed more emphatically, and with greater interest, by the simple assertion, "Thou art my rock and my fortress." A Metaphor is then, a comparison in an abridged form,—a comparison insinuated, and not fully unfolded. This may be further illustrated by the following example, brought forward by Dr. Blair;—"That great minister is the pillar of the state." Here we have an appropriate and beautiful metaphor; the minister is compared to a pillar which supports the weight of an edifice; but the resemblance of the two is presented to us in the most concise form, and yet with the greatest energy and interest, when it is said, that the minister *is* the pillar of the state.

An *Allegory* has been properly described as a continued metaphor, the explanation of which is not always afforded by the terms introduced in connexion with it, but left to the reflection and judgment of the reader. All the parables of the Sacred Scriptures are allegories; and the same remark may be applied to the fables which are found in some profane writers. A very beautiful example of this figure has been selected by Dr. Blair, from the 80th Psalm:—"Thou hast brought a vine out

of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine."

A *Comparison* or *Simile* is a figure nearly related to metaphor, but differing from it, in that the resemblance between the objects in question, is not only intimated, but expressed in a formal and explicit manner. We have a comparison in the sentence, "That great minister upholds the state, like a pillar which supports the weight of a whole edifice,"—a sentence which differs, not in sentiment, but only in the manner of expression, from the more concise remark, "That great minister is the pillar of the state."

*Personification* is the figure by which we attribute life and action to inanimate objects. No effort of the imagination is more usual than that which occasions this figure; and none has a more extensive influence on the phraseology of common life. The very familiar expressions, "The ground *thirsts* for rain," "Ambition is *restless* and insatiable," not only exhibit the ease with which the mind applies the feelings and actions of living beings to inanimate objects, and abstract properties; but they show too, the intimate connexion of these workings of the imagination with the liveliness and energy of every composition. One of the most striking and beautiful examples of Personification, is found in the subjoined passage of Milton's *Paradise Lost* :—

" So saying, her rash hand, in evil hour,  
Forth reaching to the fruit, she plucked, she eat;  
Earth felt the wound; and Nature, from her seat  
Sighing, through all her works, gave signs of woe,  
That all was lost."

*Antithesis* involves an opposition or contrast between two or more objects, expressed in the most pointed and lively manner. Some passages which have been viewed as affording examples of this figure, appear to deviate very slightly from the simplicity of ordinary narrative or reasoning. Thus there may be said to be an *Antithesis* in the following remark translated from Seneca;—"If you wish to enrich a person, study not to increase his stores, but to diminish his desires." This passage however, scarcely involves the exercise of the imagination; it is the language of the understanding, presenting its conceptions in a striking and impressive form. The figure *Antithesis* should probably be considered to occur only in those passages, in which the contrast between objects is continued, and in which the imagination is seen exerting itself to render ideas more vivid and interesting, by marking their opposition. The following translation of a passage in Cicero's oration for Milo, is a very appropriate example of this figure:—"Can it be, that when he declined putting Clodius to death with the approbation of all, he would resolve to do it against the wishes of many? Can it be, that the person, whom he scrupled to slay, when he might have done so with full justice, in a convenient place, at a suitable time, and with perfect impunity,—that this person he hesitated not to murder, in opposition to the claims of justice, in an unfavorable place, at an unsuitable time, and at the risk of capital condemnation?"

To the five leading figures of the imagination, which have been considered, two others must be added. The first of these is *Vision*,—a figure which has place, when a transaction is described as now passing before the view, so that all the vividness of reality is communicated to the narrative. Dr. Blair has beautifully illustrated this figure, by selecting the following passage translated from Cicero's fourth oration against Catiline:—"I seem to behold this city, the ornament of the earth, and the capital of all nations, suddenly involved in one conflagration. I see before me the slaughtered heaps of citizens, lying unburied in the midst of their ruined country. The furious countenance of Cethegus rises to



my view, while with a savage joy, he is triumphing in your miseries."

The other figure adverted to is *Amplification* or *Climax*,—a form of speaking, in which several considerations are brought together, so that each succeeding one heightens the impression, until the whole force of the sentiment is brought out. The following translation of a passage of Cicero, exemplifies this figure ;—"It is a crime to place a Roman citizen in bonds ; to scourge him, involves a still more fearful amount of guilt ; to put him to death, is little less than parricide ; and how then shall I describe the atrociousness, of inflicting on him the degrading death of crucifixion ?"

In respect to the figures, which have now been explained, it is necessary to inquire, by what principles and rules should we be regulated in their use ?

1. A leading principle is, that on no occasion, should figurative language be *sought for*, as an embellishment of style, but it should be employed only when it is readily suggested to the mind, and when it has the effect of rendering the leading ideas clearer or more impressive. If a comparison, for instance, naturally presents itself to the imagination, which, without requiring any effort on the part of the reader or hearer, illustrates the object under notice, its use is not only appropriate, but highly conducive to elegance ; but if a comparison or metaphor is *forced*,—if the resemblance on which the figure is founded is far-fetched, and cannot be discovered without difficulty, the impression produced by this attempt at embellishment, is decidedly unfavorable, and the general course of thought is interrupted and obscured.

2. Another rule on the subject of figurative language, is, that it should not be too largely accumulated. When metaphors, comparisons, and antitheses, occur in rapid succession, they cannot but suggest the idea, that the writer is more intent on verbal ornament, and the gratification of the fancy, than on the information which he should convey, and the convictions which his reasonings should produce.

3. A third and very important direction respecting the use of figurative language is, that *consistency* should

be, at all times, preserved. To combine metaphorical and plain language, or to associate metaphors which cannot accord with each other, is evidently absurd. Thus it is, that we instantly perceive an impropriety in the lines,

" To thee the world its present homage pays,  
The *harvest* early, but mature the *praise*."

The figure introduced in the expression, " the *harvest* early," should have been preserved throughout the line, and the second clause should have been " but mature the *crop*." There is also, an obvious inconsistency in the sentence, " There is not a single *view* of human nature, which is not sufficient to *extinguish* the *seeds* of pride." A *view* of any thing cannot be said to *extinguish*; nor can we speak, with any propriety, of the *extinguishing* of *seeds*. The necessity of preserving consistency must be particularly kept in mind in the use of metaphor and personification. The examples already cited, show how ridiculous a sentence may be made, by a confused blending of metaphorical and plain phraseology, or by a union of incongruous metaphors; and if, by an effort of the imagination, an inanimate object is invested with life and energy, and is spoken of as possessing the feelings and qualities of human beings, this personification must be kept up in all its bearings, nor must the writer in the same passage, introduce the object as powerless and inanimate.

4. A fourth rule, which applies to some of the figures which have been reviewed, is, that when an illustration or ornament is borrowed from any natural object, this object should possess a degree of *dignity*, and should never admit of being characterised as mean or vulgar. Cicero blames an orator of his own day, for designating his opponent, " *stercus Curiae*," " the ordure of the senate-house;" and he sustains his censure by the appropriate remark, that however just the comparison, the idea which it presents, is low and disgusting. The direction before us applies particularly to Metaphors, Allegories, and Comparisons; and it must be obvious, that these figures cannot afford pleasure to a refined understanding,

unless the objects selected for illustration, are calculated to raise and dignify its views.

The different nature and uses of the figures which have been examined, must influence our decisions as to the frequency of their introduction, and the cases in which they are appropriate. *Metaphor* involves generally an easy effort of the imagination; and it is so intimately connected with the association of ideas, that it frequently arises without any exertion, and insinuates itself into our most familiar addresses. An *Allegory*, from its very character as a *continued* metaphor, implies considerable study and effort, and should therefore be introduced only when the subject is such as to admit of lengthened figurative illustration. A *Comparison* derives its excellence, from its adaptation to render an idea clearer, or to fix it more deeply in the memory; and in the use of this figure, therefore, the understanding is chiefly interested, and clearness of illustration should be preferred to every other consideration. *Personification*, if confined to single words, as in the expression, "The ground *thirsts* for rain," is a figure which may be frequently introduced with advantage; it requires little effort of mind, nor does it involve so wide a departure from simplicity of language, as to fix the attention and excite inquiry. But when this figure assumes a higher and more commanding character, as in the passage of Milton already cited,—

"Earth felt the wound; and Nature, from her seat  
Sighing, through all her works, gave signs of woe,  
That all was lost: "—

there should be something in the subject, to rouse at once the imagination and the feelings, and to sustain the mind in an effort so bold and impressive. An *Antithesis*, if carried to any length, evidently involves considerable exertion on the part of the writer; and thus, the frequent introduction of this figure must give to a composition, a labored appearance, and cannot interest and gratify the mind. In animated descriptions of past or future events, the figure *Vision* is highly appropriate. It seems to give a present reality to the transactions

contemplated ; it calls into action all the powers of the mind ; and it affords high mental pleasure, at the same time that it produces a deep impression on the feelings. In a *Climax*, as in an Antithesis, the mind is seen to put forth all its energies, in order to produce effect. This figure can, therefore, be properly introduced, only when the subject calls for a powerful effort of the understanding, and when the attention of the reader has been so fixed, as to prepare him for full conviction, and for receiving a deep impression of the sentiment enforced. To affect a climax, when the subject does not naturally suggest a series of ideas, each rising above the other in its dignity and power, cannot fail to create a feeling of disgust ; and the repeated introduction of this figure, instead of adding to the energy and beauty of a composition, must impair its excellence, because it presents a mind, not moving forward in its native strength, and pouring forth vigorous and convincing sentiments, but laboring so to arrange its language, as to cause conviction, even when the intrinsic weight of its reasonings, is insufficient to produce it.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE (*continued*).—THE FIGURES OF THE PASSIONS.

THE figures which have already passed under review, have been properly designated the Figures of the Imagination ; for although some of them suppose a greater or less excitement of feeling, they are chiefly distinguished by those efforts of the fancy which they involve. In the present chapter, our attention must be directed to a few other figures, which are chiefly remarkable as forming the language of strong and ardent passion, though they do not exclude an exercise of the imaginative faculty.

The first of these figures is *Hyperbole*, or *Exaggeration*, which has place when we magnify an object

beyond its proper limits. The epithets which, in familiar conversation, we sometimes apply to natural objects, afford instances of Hyperbole. When we assert of an object, that it is "whiter than snow," or of an animal, that it is "swifter than the wind," these expressions do not admit of being understood in their strict and literal meaning; they can only signify, "exceedingly white," "incalculably swift." The phrases before us involve *Comparisons*, in addition to affording instances of Hyperbole; and the exercise of the imagination is seen in the suggestion of the two objects, *snow* and *the wind*, in order to illustrate the whiteness of the object, and the swiftness of the animal, spoken of. The Hyperbole consists in carrying the statements further than strict propriety would allow; and this transgression of the bounds of sober thought, is to be ascribed to a warmth of feeling, which prompts the speaker or writer to present an object under the most impressive views. The use of Hyperbole appears natural in compositions, which unfold the passions of love, anger, grief, rage, despair, or any other that can excite, or agitate, or overwhelm the human mind; but the particular Hyperbole introduced in any instance, must be suited to the precise *character* and *degree* of the passion excited. A bold and just instance of this figure is seen in the following passage of the soliloquy of Satan, in Milton's *Paradise Lost*:—

"Me miserable! which way shall I fly  
Infinite wrath, and infinite despair?  
Which way I fly, is hell, myself am hell!  
And in the lowest depth, a lower deep,  
Still threatening to devour me, opens wide,  
To which the hell I suffer, seems a heaven."—

The sense of present misery,—the despair of any solace or mitigation of suffering,—the dread of increasing and accumulated wretchedness, are here expressed in the strongest language; but however bold the figure, it accords with nature, and is admirably suited to exhibit the influence of these feelings on a guilty mind.

The second figure, among those dictated by passion, is *Apostrophe*. It implies a turning aside from the

regular course of a narrative or argument, to address some person or thing. Many very beautiful examples of this figure, are afforded in the poems of Ossian ; and of these the following is a specimen :—" A thousand spears arose around ; the people of Caros rose. Why, daughter of Toscar, why that tear ? My son, though alone, is brave. Oscar is like a beam of the sky ; he turns around, and the people fall." The subjoined passage of the apostle Paul, affords an instance of the figure Apostrophe, combined with Personification. " So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law : but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The third figure among those which arise from impassioned feeling, is *Exclamation*. With this the Lamentations of Jeremiah appropriately begin :—" How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people ! how is she become as a widow ! she that was great among the nations, and Princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary !" A very beautiful instance of this figure, is found in an extract already made from the Rev. Robert Hall's sermon on Modern Infidelity :—" Is the idea of an almighty and perfect Ruler unfriendly to any passion which is consistent with innocence, or an obstruction to any design which it is not shameful to avow ? Eternal God, on what are thine enemies intent ! What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of Heaven must not pierce ! Miserable men ! Proud of being the offspring of chance ; in love with universal disorder ; whose happiness is involved in the belief of there being no witness to their designs ; and who are at ease, only because they suppose themselves inhabitants of a forsaken and fatherless world !"

The fourth and last figure of the passions, which it is necessary to mention, is that termed *Interrogation*.

This figure has place, when an inquiry is made, not to elicit information, or to intimate uncertainty, but to impress a sentiment more deeply on the mind, by an appeal to the reader or hearer, as to its indisputable truth and propriety. Thus in the extract just made from the works of Robert Hall, we have, "Is the idea of an almighty and perfect Ruler unfriendly to any passion which is consistent with innocence, or an obstruction to any design which it is not shameful to avow?" The admired author of this passage certainly had no doubt as to the reply to be given to this inquiry; and he proposed it only to mark in the strongest manner, the consistency of religious principle with every innocent desire, and every virtuous design. How much more impressive is this interrogation, than the most positive assertion could have been! and how greatly would the force of the sentiment be impaired, were we to substitute, "The idea of an almighty and perfect Ruler is not unfriendly to any passion which is consistent with innocence, or an obstruction to any design which it is not shameful to avow."—The writings of the ancient Prophets afford us several beautiful examples of the figure *Interrogation*. Thus Isaiah, when enlarging on the absolute independence of the Most High, and his infinite superiority to all created beings, inquires, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing."

In the use of the several figures of passion now explained, we have to consider, whether the subject calls forth that peculiar *kind* and *degree* of feeling, which naturally suggest their introduction. The mind of an intelligent reader would revolt at an Hyperbole, when there is nothing in the feelings of the writer to justify extravagant expressions; an Exclamation or Apostrophe, introduced in order to produce effect, without being

the natural expression of strong emotions, can only display the weakness of the author who employs it; and the figure Interrogation is appropriate only when the mind *feels strongly* in relation to the sentiment enforced, and *ardently desires* to produce conviction.

Before we close the subject of figurative language, it may be proper briefly to explain two figures or tropes, which do not involve an exercise either of the imagination or of the passions. They are indeed, properly *tropes*; and they require to be considered, not because a knowledge of them can exert an important influence on composition, but because those whose attention is directed to literary pursuits, may sometimes find them mentioned in explanations of the usages of language. The first of these is *Metonymy*,—a trope which has place when a cause is put for an effect, or an effect for a cause, when the name of a receiver is introduced for that of the thing received, or that of a sign for the object which it signifies. To this trope we refer the expressions, "They read Milton," for "Milton's works,"—"we should venerate grey hairs," for "we should venerate old age,"—"the kettle boils," for "the water in the kettle boils,"—"to wear the toga," for "to engage in civil professions," in opposition to military enterprises. The second figure alluded to is *Synecdoche*, which occurs when the whole is put for a part, or a part for the whole, a genus for a species, or a species for a genus, and an attribute or quality for the subject possessing it. Thus we say, "a fleet of thirty sail," for "a fleet of thirty ships," and we sometimes employ the term "youth" to intimate "the young." These tropes, however, only present illustrations of the metaphorical applications of particular words; and a systematic acquaintance with them, and with others enumerated by philologists, can afford little assistance to an author in forming compositions, the excellence of which will be decided by the intellectual power which they may display.



## CHAPTER X.

THE LEADING CHARACTERS OF STYLE,—DIFFUSE,  
CONCISE, PLAIN, NEAT, ORNAMENTED,  
VEHEMENT.

EVERY mind appears to have a character peculiar to itself, which exerts an important influence on its modes of expression. If an individual is accustomed to think strongly, and to seize a train of grand and striking ideas, his diction will be vigorous and impressive; if habituated to dwell on a topic that may excite his interest, with a reluctance to pass forward to any other subject, his language will be diffuse; if interested only with chaste simplicity, and destitute of taste for highly finished ornament, his style will be neat and unassuming; if on the other hand, attracted by external polish, and pleased with the efforts of a vivid imagination, the character of his language will be ornamental or flowery; and if distinguished by strength of feeling, his diction will be animated and powerful, and will occasionally rise to impassioned earnestness.

It must be evident, likewise, that the diction of the same writer should vary, according to the peculiar nature of the subjects which engage his attention. A narrative,—a philosophical treatise,—and a public address, naturally require different kinds of style. In the relation of facts, the memory is the faculty chiefly called into exercise, though the imagination may exert itself in the suggestion of illustrations, and the feelings may be sometimes roused so as to dictate impassioned language; and with this state of the mental powers, the style of a narrative should accord. In a philosophical treatise, the reasoning faculty is to be brought out in its calm and deliberate exercise; and any attempt at embellishment, or any endeavour to excite the passions, must, in this kind of composition, be peculiarly improper. In a public address, designed to convince and impel to action, every faculty of the mind should be roused to vigorous exertion, and the various emotions

which can influence the heart, should be perceptible in the language of the speaker. In such an address, therefore, the simple phraseology of narrative, the deliberate style of reflection and argument, the animated language of a lively imagination, and the energetic diction of passionate emotions, may all have place, and their appropriate intermixture will conduce to its interest and power.

These remarks will suffice to introduce the subject of *the various characters of style*. The general style of every writer must have some peculiar character impressed on it, arising from his habits of thought, and his general temperament of mind ; and the style of the same writer will vary at different times, on account of the peculiar nature of the subjects to which his attention is directed, and the peculiar design of the address or composition in which he is engaged.

Dr. Blair has enumerated the following general characters of style,—the Diffuse, the Concise, the Feeble, the Nervous,—the Dry, the Plain, the Neat, the Elegant, the Florid,—the Simple, the Affected, the Vehement. He adopts this distribution, however, not to direct a learner in the formation of his style, or to elucidate the kind of diction, which different subjects require, but to enable a reader to criticise the writings of authors, and to express the peculiar merits, and the various degrees of excellence and defect, which attach to their compositions. Thus there are no subjects which call for that which is termed a *Feeble* style,—a style which implies the total absence of energetic and expressive language, and which seems to evince a mind incapable of vigorous and animated thought. On no occasion, likewise, should a writer adopt an *Affected* style ; because every kind and degree of affectation must disgust a cultivated mind. That style which the Doctor designates *Simple*, and which he distinguishes from a *Plain* style, is one characterised by an arrangement of words, agreeing with the natural order of our ideas ; but such a correspondence between the arrangement of sentences, and the order in which ideas are naturally presented to the mind, is essential to the beauty of every

composition, and should have place in every kind of style.—Three other characters of style, which Dr. Blair mentions, do not require lengthened consideration. The *Nervous* style is one which is constantly vigorous and energetic, whether the language employed is concise, or rich and flowing ; and it stands opposed to the Feeble style, which invariably supposes the total absence of vigour of thought and expression. A *Dry* manner of writing is one in which harmony and elegance are entirely disregarded, and in which the clear expression of our ideas is the only object of attention. Such a style certainly deserves not imitation. A *Florid* or *Luxuriant* style, also, is highly censurable ; it involves an *excess* of ornament ; and it conveys the impression of a mind seeking to dazzle by the brilliance of its imagery, rather than to instruct and please by the clearness of its information, and the weight of its reasonings.

The most important distinctions of style, therefore, appear to be the Diffuse, the Concise, the Plain, the Neat, the Elegant or Ornamented, and the Vehement. Each of these must be separately explained ; and their respective merits will form interesting and instructive subjects of inquiry.

The *Diffuse* is that in which there is a rich copiousness of language, and in which the same ideas are repeated, though with a variety in the images selected for illustration, or in the degree of force with which they are conveyed. The following passages afford examples of this manner of writing :—“ Domestic society is the seminary of social affections, the cradle of sensibility, where the first elements are acquired of that tenderness and humanity which cement mankind together ; and which, were they entirely extinguished, the whole fabric of social institutions would dissolve.”—“ It is the moral relation which man is supposed to bear to a superior Power, the awful idea of accountability, the influence which his present dispositions and actions are conceived to have upon his eternal destiny, more than any superiority of intellectual powers abstracted from these considerations, which invest him with such mysterious gran-

deur, and constitute the firmest guard on the sanctuary of human life."

The *Concise* style is that in which sentiments are compressed into the fewest words, and all repetitions studiously avoided. The subjoined passage illustrates this method of composition :—" No intimation is given of any duty we owe to angels. Yet we may admire and love them ; but we have no warrant to pray to them, or to offer them any kind of worship. What they do for us must be referred to the Sovereign of all worlds, to whom we should ascribe praise and glory for ever. No doubt they are rewarded without the homage of mortals ; and are ever ready to join the redeemed of the Lord in everlasting songs of praise."

A question may arise, as to the respective advantages of the two kinds of style which have now been considered. A *diffuse* manner of writing, if connected with vigour of thought, and with variety of illustration, is pleasing and impressive ; and by *detaining* the attention on those ideas, on which the weight of a passage depends, it gives them a more powerful influence. Thus in the latter of the examples of a diffuse style already cited, how pleasingly is the attention made to rest on the idea of the moral accountability of man, as now in a state of probation for an eternal existence ;—" It is the moral relation which man is supposed to bear to a superior Power, the awful idea of accountability, the influence which his present dispositions are conceived to have upon his eternal destiny."—A *Concise* style, on the other hand, promotes a rapid transition of thought, and is often conducive to liveliness and animation. In descriptive writing, it may be appropriately adopted ; because it enables the mind to trace without interruption, the several objects or transactions presented to it, and to embrace these objects or transactions in one general view. The sentence of Cæsar, " I came, I saw, I conquered," forms a much more vivid and animated description of the successful enterprise to which it had reference, than any lengthened statement, embellished with all the pomp and imagery of a vigorous fancy. A copious style appears to be pre-

ferable to conciseness of language, in addresses delivered to a public audience ; because the hearers have no leisure to pause and reflect on the ideas which are consecutively advanced, so that unless the leading ideas are dwelt on by the speaker, much of their force must be lost. In written compositions, on the other hand, although diffuseness is often preferable to studied brevity, there must only be a chaste copiousness, freed from all verbal redundancies. Nor should a writer endeavour to be invariably diffuse, or invariably concise. When a long series of copious sentences is introduced, the diffuse style produces a degree of weariness, and can scarcely fail to degenerate into languid verbosity : and when, on the other hand, there is a lengthened succession of sentences, compressed into the smallest space, and excluding all freedom of illustration, a composition becomes harsh and abrupt, and the mind of the reader is fatigued by the rapid and unremitted apprehension of new ideas.

We have now to consider those kinds of style, which are termed the *Plain*, the *Neat*, and the *Ornamented*,—distinctions which obviously refer to the degree of embellishment, or the want of embellishment, which attaches to a composition.

The *Plain* style is one in which there is *no studied ornament*, though it does not absolutely reject an harmonious arrangement of words, and that beauty which arises from a clear and natural expression of ideas.

The *Neat* style is one which evinces a moderate regard to ornament, but in which ornament is ever made secondary to clear and vigorous thought. Its beauty is of a chaste and simple character, resulting not so much from the efforts of the imagination, or the energetic expression of sublime ideas, as from the judicious combination of sentences, and their harmonious structure. The following passage may be viewed as an example of this kind of writing :—" Exposed as man is, to innumerable dangers, difficulties, and temptations, life would be a heavy burden, which could not be borne, were he left entirely to himself. The ALL-WISE CREATOR, who foresaw these things, planted in the human heart a social principle, which, when properly cultivated, inclines every

one to love and assist his neighbour. And while this principle continues to operate, every individual contributes, more or less, to the good of the whole. Hence, we may rationally infer, that those systems of philosophy and religion, which require men to seclude themselves from social intercourse with the world, are erroneous in their principles, and mischievous in their consequences. Heaven itself, the perfection of all that is wise and good, is a society of created intelligences, who, in the company of each other, and in the presence of God and the Lamb, enjoy inconceivable felicity."

The *Ornamented* style rises above that just considered, as combining the highest beauty of expression with strength of sentiment, and as involving all those efforts of the imagination which can attract and delight, while it exhibits the full and efficient exercise of the understanding. A passage already cited from a discourse of the Rev. Richard Watson, illustrates this character of style:—"Go to the heavens, which canopy man with grandeur, cheer his steps with successive light, and mark his festivals by their chronology; go to the atmosphere, which invigorates his spirits, and is to him the breath of life; go to the smiling fields, decked with verdure for his eye, and covered with fruits for his sustenance; go to every scene which spreads beauty before his gaze, which is made harmoniously vocal to his ear, which fills and delights the imagination by its glow, or by its greatness: we travel with you, we admire with you, we feel and enjoy with you, we adore with you, but we stay not with you. We hasten onward in search of a demonstration more convincing that 'God is love,' and we rest not till we press into the strange, the mournful, the joyful scenes of Calvary, and amidst the throng of invisible and astonished angels, weeping disciples, and the mocking multitude, under the arch of the darkened heaven, and with earth trembling beneath our feet, we gaze upon the meek, the resigned, but fainting Sufferer, and exclaim, '*Herein* is love,'—*Herein*, and no where else is it so affectingly, so unequivocally demonstrated,—'not that we loved God; but that God loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'"

Among the three kinds of style which have just been explained, we may perhaps decide in favor of a *Neat* style, which shall rise, when the subject requires elevation, to the dignity and beauty of the *Ornamented*. A simple elegance of language is that which the understanding and the ear equally relish, and which must ever continue to please ; but there are subjects which require a degree of sublimity, and which should be treated of in commanding and impressive language. Thus a style of composition, which never proceeds beyond neatness, is not adapted to every occasion ; nor on the other hand, is a style in which ornament abounds, that calculated to afford the highest pleasure to a refined mind. When indeed, embellishment is constantly studied, it suggests the idea, that the writer is amused with external decoration, and is not sufficiently intent on affording information, or producing conviction.

The remaining kind of style is that termed the *Vehement*,—a kind which exhibits the impetuous ardour of excited feeling. One of the most striking examples of this character of writing, is furnished by a passage of the Rev. Robert Hall, which has already been cited, but the force and beauty of which entitle it to frequent repetition :—" More than all, their infatuated eagerness, their parricidal zeal to extinguish a sense of Deity, must excite astonishment and horror. Is the idea of an almighty and perfect Ruler unfriendly to any passion which is consistent with innocence, or an obstruction to any design which it is not shameful to avow ? Eternal God, on what are thine enemies intent ! What are those enterprises of guilt and horror, that, for the safety of their performers, require to be enveloped in a darkness which the eye of Heaven must not pierce !" —The employment of vehement diction is proper only when all the powers of the mind are roused, or when the passions are strongly excited. In these cases, nature dictates its use ; but if it is affected when there is no real ardour or impetuosity of feeling, it can only create dissatisfaction and disgust.

The two subjoined passages have been selected, as affording examples of chaste and powerful eloquence.

The authors of them attained a richness and beauty of expression, which cannot fail to excite admiration, while the English language exists. The former is taken from a sermon of the Rev. Richard Watson : " If, when we ask, ' What is man ? ' the answer required should respect the capacity of man, under the influence of the grace of God, to rise from this state of wretchedness and pollution, it has been already given ; and there is not one among these deluded millions, whether they dwell in the uttermost parts of the earth, or surround us in our daily intercourse with society,—whether they are dark by being plunged in surrounding darkness, or dark by a wilful exclusion of surrounding light,—but may be brought to the knowledge and love of God our SAVIOUR. The conscience which guilt darkens and disturbs, may be sprinkled by the blood of JESUS ; the heart which swells and rankles with every evil passion, may become all purity, tenderness, and love ; and the body the temple of the HOLY GHOST. Those who have no hope, may fly for refuge to the hope set before them ; and they who wander in innumerable paths of destructive error, like sheep going astray, may return ' to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls.' "

The second passage is from the pen of the Rev. Robert Hall, and relates to the tendency of the Socinian system. " It is a cold negation, a system of renunciation and dissent, imparting that feeling of desolation to the heart, which is inseparable from the extinction of ancient attachments ; teaching us no longer to admire, to adore, to trust, or to love,—but with a most impaired and attenuated affection,—objects, in the contemplation of which, we before deemed it safe and even obligatory, to lose ourselves in the indulgence of these delightful emotions. Under the pretence of simplifying Christianity, it obliterates so many of its truths ; so little is left to occupy the mind, to fill the imagination, or to touch the heart ; that, when the attracting novelty and the heat of disputation are subsided, it speedily consigns its converts to apathy and indifference. He who is wont to expatiate in the wide field of revelation, surrounded by all that can gratify the sight or regale the



senses, reposing in its green pastures, and beside the still transparent waters, reflecting the azure of the heavens, the lily of the valley, and the cedar of Lebanon, no sooner approaches the confines of Socinianism, than he enters on a dreary and melancholy waste. Whatever is most sweet and attractive in religion,—whatever of the grandeur that elevates, or the solemnity that awes, the mind, is inseparably connected with those truths it is the avowed object of that system to subvert; and since it is not what we deny, but what we believe, that nourishes piety, no wonder it languishes under so meager and scanty a diet. The littleness and poverty of the Socinian system ultimately insures its neglect, because it makes no provision for that appetite for the immense and magnificent, which the contemplation of nature inspires and gratifies, and which even reason itself prompts us to anticipate in a revelation from the Eternal mind."

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